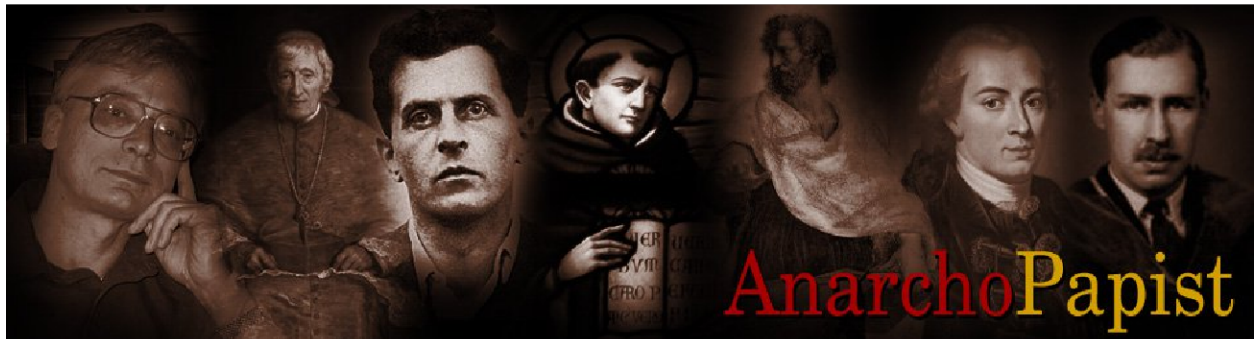


Anarchopapist

Volume I: January 2013 – May 2013

Bryce Laliberte

(1991-2022)



Introduction

Bryce Laliberte was, for a few years, one of the key voices of the “Neo-Reactionist” (or “Dark Enlightenment”) movement, whose central figure is Curtis Yarvin, better known as Mencius Moldbug. Laliberte’s version of Neo-Reactionism was heavily influenced by his traditional Catholicism (hence St. John Henry Newman and St. Thomas Aquinas appearing in his masthead, above). It is fitting that his first blog was named *Amtheomusings* (2008-2012); it is still (as of this writing) available at <https://amtheomusings.wordpress.com/>. In the last updated version of the “About” page on *Amtheomusings*, Laliberte described himself this way:

“I am Bryce, a junior student at the University of Minnesota – Duluth studying philosophy and economics. I have a primary interest in metaphysics, religion, ethics, (philosophy of) science, and political philosophy. I’m a Roman Catholic Christian and conservative anarcho-capitalist, a combination of viewpoints I’m sure isn’t represented elsewhere on the blogosphere, so I suppose I am to some extent tasked with the burden of representing that view to the best of my ability. Posts on my blog should be understood as always tentative, a worldview which is a work-in-progress. If you would like some overview of my beliefs, I would suggest looking at my [Important Posts](#), which is updated periodically.”

At the end of 2012, Laliberte took a short hiatus from blogging before rebranding his work under the new blog title *Anarchopapist* (2013-2015). During this time, he also wrote a few articles for the *Daily Caller* and was involved with the Neo-Reactionist group the Hestia Society. Shortly after his final blog post (3/23/2015), Laliberte deleted his blog, sometime between April 12 and April 13, 2015. He continued to write, penning ebooks such as *Technocephalization*, *The Lord of Bitcoin*, *The Angelic Revolution*, and *The Creation of Public Discourse*. However, he was filled with paranoia, and quite possibly mental illness: on April 30, 2019, he published a long account of his sufferings at *The American Sun*, under the title, [“How The Illuminati Fucked Up My Life.”](#) He had also long suffered physical ill-health, particularly with his heart, and he eventually died of endocarditis on August 28, 2022. His [obituary](#) details his lifelong love of learning, without mention of his philosophical persuasions

Despite his later breakdown, the writing he did during his prime is one of the major expositions of Neo-Reactionary thought. Unfortunately, since the deletion of *Anarchopapist* in 2015, this writing has not been easily accessible, outside the articles included in the [Neoreactionary Canon](#). Here, though, begins a project to make this writing easily accessible again, by copying the text from the captures of the blog made by the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. Due to the length of the blog, this project will be split into five volumes: I (January-May 2013), II (June-July 2013), III (August-November 2013), IV (December 2013-July 2014), V (August 2014-March 2015). Along with the texts of the blog posts themselves, important comments by Laliberte are also included under the respective posts.

The Anarcho-Papist Manifesto

Thursday, January 3, 2013

<https://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/01/03/the-anarcho-papist-manifesto/>

It is doubtless the provocative title of my blog shall be widely misunderstood and mischaracterized. Rather than bend to the pressures of social fancies and mistakes, and utilize a more humdrum name which would ultimately be not only overlooked but would also reinforce the propaganda against the two pillars of principles I stand by, I am doubling down on the name in order that its light be brought to the world and the images associated with both be clarified and civilly approached when they so rarely are given the time of day. I stand by the philosophically refined methodology that brings me to the two defining features of my faith, which has been expounded upon at my previous blog and will now, with all the more fervor and impassioned bombast, be sustained here at the Anarcho-Papist. I raise and proclaim the banner of a thoroughgoing orthodox Catholicism, here known as Papism, and the banner of a comprehensive rational libertarianism, here known as Anarchism.

There is only liberty under God, not the State.

Taking each pillar of my faith by themselves, there is not much to remark upon or to clarify that has not been clarified elsewhere around the veritable Internet by a host of sources. What objection might be brought against each position that you might think now to bring forward for my attention has been attended elsewhere already, and of course I shall get around to explaining my own vision to these regards. (Of course, you can find a great extent of my opinion on these matters gone over at my old blog, [Amtheomusings](#).) I can only point out that these must be bookmarked for later going over; I intend now to clarify the principal confusion of Anarcho-Papism.

What is meant by the combination of these terms? Those who are at least generous enough to assume I am not right away in contradiction will understand that I do not mean there should be somehow a stateless society under the administration of a theocratic government. But then what is the meaning? I can summarize my view in this way for now.

I am led by the exercise of my reason to believe with uttermost sincerity in the existence of God. Likewise, I find that Man is fallen, and the imperfect cannot improve itself to perfection except by the admixture of some perfection. This harkens the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection. Revelation must however be maintained down through history by appointed guardians, so that we are not left with the chaos of doctrinal non sequitor. This leads to the Catholic Church.

Informed by my faith and philosophical scrutiny, I have adopted a principled conservative view of society. Individuals are most fulfilled in their life and relationships when they are structured by a society founded in the organic familial institution, which has over the last century been corrupted by ceaseless encroachment of the welfare-warfare State, which may otherwise be called the Decline of Western Civilization. Where power structure is otherwise rooted in familial reality and voluntary associations of community, fraternity, business, and church, the atomization of the members of the family by the introduction of implicit and explicit welfare dependency leads to the modern horrors and excesses of the the modernized, democratized, militarized, feminized, egalitarian, totalitarian State-Society.

This diagnosis of the sickness of society as rooted in the obsession with Statism is radical, but the time is past for calm contemplative speculation on the nature of the State and its history. The coercive essence of the state cannot produce virtue, and it should stop being pretended by those who profess to be Christian or conservative or libertarian that evil can be tolerated or compromised with. In response to the evil of Fallen Man we can only insist all the stronger on the beauty of the imago dei, and in response to the evil of anti-social politics we can only insist all the stronger on the beauty of the social animal.

Or to put the essence of my blog more simply, I am a Catholic and an anarchist, and I shall be espousing my opinions here to the world from such a perspective.

Regarding the Changes

Friday, January 4, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/01/04/regarding-the-changes/>

Before I get around to the usual topics, I thought I would go over a few quick administrative notices regarding changes from my old domain.

The topics and focus shall be all the same. I simply grew tired of the old domain and I do hope that the new name will be at once more informative and more enticing to potential readers. There will be all the same proclivity to matters regarding politics, metaphysics, economics, and so on, and a few ideas have been burning in my mind lately that I should like to attend to here shortly. I must thank my friend [Eric from RPG Catholic](#) for suggesting the name to me.

Anyone who posted previously at Amtheomusings will have to be given permission here to post, but once I've okayed one post from a user all the other posts will be put up automatically. My policy on comments is that I reserve the right to moderate with discretion when I believe that a commenter is either off-topic or downright inflammatory, but I otherwise welcome all comments no matter their content.

The header features, from left to right: Hans-Hermann Hoppe, John Henry Newman, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, and Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn. I chose each of these thinkers for their influence on my own thought and philosophy. I thank my friend Amanda for making the header.

Descriptive and Proscriptive Forms of Anarchy

Sunday, January 6, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/01/06/descriptive-and-prescriptive-forms-of-anarchy/>

I want to here make a distinction between *descriptive* and *prescriptive* forms of anarchy. There are multiple forms of proposed anarchy which, while united under the supposition that there would be no government, still vary as widely as forms of government. I am an anarcho-capitalist, but there are also anarcho-communists, anarcho-syndicalists, anarcho-primitivists, anarcho-feminism, and so on. The “anarcho” part means, of course, a lack of government, while the latter describes alternate forms of socioeconomic arrangement.

A prescriptive form of anarchy is, very simply, the socioeconomic arrangement one believes ought to be the case. Anarcho-communists generally fall under this umbrella; they believe there should be no ownership of the means of production, and that this should happen without a government. Those who support the state in some form cannot be prescriptive anarchists of any form.

A descriptive form of anarchy can be considered the socioeconomic arrangement one expects to occur provided society is well-formed without government. It takes the formula of “If anarchy were the case, I would expect x socioeconomic arrangement.” One can subscribe to a descriptive form without thereby prescribing it. For instance, one could adhere to a descriptive form of anarcho-capitalism, but because they prefer socialism, they would not prescribe anarchism on that account.

On the other hand, the descriptive form one adheres to could become an argument for that prescriptive form in the case one prescribes that sort of socioeconomic arrangement. If one preferred syndicalism, and they were also a descriptive anarch-syndicalist, then they could be a prescriptive anarcho-syndicalist on that account. Most anarchists employ an argument of this form for their anarchism, since most don’t find a non-feasible social arrangement preferable (but then there are the anarcho-primitivists, who revel in non-feasibility).

There is also a plain prescriptive anarchism, which leaves the question of socioeconomic arrangement to the wayside in dealing with whether there ought to be a state at all. One can be both a prescriptive anarchist and a prescriptive anarcho-xist, but it would form separate arguments. A prescriptive anarchist is, however, on all accounts one who finds arrangement of society by the state to be odious and immoral

Comment on January 8, 2013:

I’ll be expanding on it a lot more, but for now I could put it this way:

- 1) Coercion is the essence of the state
- 2) Coercion is never moral
- 3) Ergo, the state is never moral

Socioeconomic and Political Arrangement

Wednesday, January 9, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/01/09/socioeconomic-and-political-arrangement/>

As briefly described in my last post, [Descriptive and Prescriptive Forms of Anarchy](#), I would make a distinction between a society's socioeconomic arrangement and its political arrangement. My reasoning for this is simple: the method of distributing labor and resources is conceptually distinct from the matter of legal order (my use of "legal" is *purely* of the [positive sense](#)). Certain legal orders do not imply certain socioeconomic orders, and, at least in practice, vice versa. There are certain limits to this kind of account, since some legal orders are intrinsically tied up with the aim of bringing about particular socioeconomic orders, but *in principle* they can be distinguished, and it is in the possibility of this distinguishing that I found the distinction between socioeconomic and political arrangement.

Before continuing, some definitions. A *socioeconomic arrangement* encompasses the order of relations between individuals that constitute the social constructs of institutions such as family, market, church, fraternity, and so on. I tie together the sociological and economic aspect of society in this way since there is no definite line between the two. Without individuals you do not have a society of whom labor produces, and nothing to whom such product could be distributed to, but then you must also account for the relations the individuals take on (I am for now avoiding the dichotomy of methodological individualism and collectivism; [this for now](#), more later). Which relations individuals most frequently take up is your socioeconomic arrangement. For instance, we presently live in a quasi-feminized corporatist social democracy. There are other terms I might apply to the American society, but these aspects are most prescient when it comes to distinguishing it from other societies around the world, though of course it is very typical of 1st world postmodern statist civilization.

Political arrangement refers to those legal, often involuntary and coercive, ties between individuals that account not only for response to infringement, but are often tied up in systematic infringement on the rights of the individual and societal institutions (e.g. taxation). Clearly, legal ties in society must have some effect on socioeconomic arrangement, which is why though I note the conceptual distinction between the two, they are bound up with each other so that half the time you cannot tell which is effecting which in what way. As a matter of historical accident fitting to our present modernist narrative, political and socioeconomic arrangement are so bound together that they cannot properly be extracted from each other, so I note that my distinction here presses against some very well established political and social assumptions that perhaps, ironically, only postmodernists are all that sympathetic to me.

Now what are the limits of distinction? There are some economic constants that we can always determine to be an effect of statism on the socioeconomic arrangement. Very simply, whatever forms a (perceived) means of deferring cost to others for some activity means that, *ceteris paribus*, you will get more of that activity. As a simple formula, whatever you subsidize, you get

more of (in some way). A legal order does not necessarily require a system of subsidization in this way; after all, there can be functioning legal systems without a state, and this would render very little effect on socioeconomic arrangement, since there is so little social and economic distortion caused by systematic infringement against individuals and institutions. We must consider that a statist system, on the other hand, is by definition an aggressor against persons and institutions; it is allowed by society the right to initiate violence for its own ends (e.g. conscription). This means a statist system entails a circumscription of possible socioeconomic arrangements, since you will now have pervasive and systematic distortions taking place that would not occur voluntarily. That's what the introduction of coercion does; it forces the reallocation of resources to persons and institutions that would *otherwise* not be supported. (If one wishes to deny this, then why is it always the argument of statists that we need the state in order to secure enough funding for military, police, law, roads, etc? If not for that, then why even pretend we need the state?)

So when we move beyond legal systems that could occur in anarchy, we know, by plain deductive analysis, that some distortion of the socioeconomic arrangement occurs. The only question is which groups and kinds of things are subsidized. I mean here not merely the explicit subsidization of certain goods, though that is included, but more importantly those groups and individuals who are implicitly subsidized through the legal system established by brute force against the victimized party. We are asking, essentially, "*For what* is the state's socialism?" (On the word socialism: A state is in essence socialist, since it involves the redistribution of goods from one party to another and the state "ownership" of at least the right to infringe, though of course it is often many other things such as schools and roads. [While one like William Vallicella would say that "socialist" is only proper to use provided we are speaking of the state ownership of all the means of production](#), this is not only a useless sort of definition but it concedes to those who advocate *socializing* society that they are not fundamentally changing the socioeconomic arrangement of society, when of course they really are.) I prefer Hans-Hermann Hoppe's definition of socialism: the centrally planned coercive redistribution of goods from one (or more) group/s to others. As such, a form of socialism that benefits the rich over the poor is still socialism (e.g. corporatism), though of course most people usually have in mind a socialism meant to benefit "the poor." There are other groups which can be identified; religious institutions, certain fraternities, men, women, so on and so forth. Identifying which of these groups are most benefited at the expense of others, or how the socioeconomic arrangement is distorted, is how you determine what kind of statist political arrangement you have.

This is why those interested in figuring out a preferential societal arrangement must inevitably be involved in political theory. Hence, despite my anarchism, I continue my studies of social political philosophy, as opposed to mere social philosophy, since the two are, by the practice of society, unable to be soundly separated from each other. It is also good to show to others how society is disfigured by the state. I reckon I'm sitting on some good arguments for anarchism that appeal most to social conservatives, since they at least claim to be interested in leaving society free to form what socioeconomic arrangement it will without involvement from the state. Modern liberals, feminists, and other kinds of socialists intent on changing the present and preventing past socioeconomic arrangements are, on the other hand, much more interested in statism due to this, which explains their unbridled state worship and persistent advocacy of a State-Society; and modern conservatives are mostly stupid enough to go along with it. This is why I say the time is past for contemplative speculation, and those who are looking to bring the force of arms against individuals and institutions should be called out for it.

The Well-Established Order Assumption

Friday, January 11, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/01/11/the-well-established-order-assumption/>

In political philosophy, economics, as well as business game theoretical considerations are constantly in place to determine how certain situations engender more and less likely moves taken by the players. An assumption that goes with each particular game is the well-established position of each player; say in some case we want to see how a national chain would compete against local retailers. In that case, we are assuming a well-established order, and our analysis of what takes place follows from that assumption. We do not stop so much to ask how they came to have the position they did, we only go along with it. It is something granted for the sake of argument.

When it comes to the description of a particular [political arrangement and how it is meant to produce some given socioeconomic arrangement](#), we must allow ourselves to appeal to well-established order assumptions. *Every* legal order requires some level of trust between plaintiffs, prosecutors, judges, and so on, be they a statist or anarchist legal order. Statists often employ this double standard, where we are to suppose that because people presently have some level of trust in the statist system, they would never come to gain trust a legal system with judges who operate on the basis of reputation. But it is still eminent that a legal order is possible that could serve justice. We can only suppose there would be a multitude of large and small firms, catering to different kinds of problems and clients, much in the same way the restaurant business is comprised of many large and small stores. You trust McDonald's to serve your order at the price it specifies? Legal firms would have the same sort of implicit trust from society. This is in line with the well-established order assumption. Because people would be living in this order, and the order would be comported to the way people are used to living, it would be trusted and would work.

This is not a principle meant to apply only to legal order, but for every sort of endeavor undertaken by society. Not only those services that people assume the state must provide, such as roads, education, and defense, but clothing, food, electronics, cars, and so on. All these things are taken care of without the state specifically ordering them to be (and even despite burdensome taxes and regulations), and the same would follow for all those things people assume the state must take care of in an anarchical society.

Thus, when it comes to discussing the provision of these sorts of goods in anarchy I will employ a kind of game theoretical analysis to the sorts of situations that will arise and show how they tend towards a balance even with the absence of some ultimate decision-maker. The consideration will start in most instances from the assumption of an established position by some given institution through which individuals mediate for these goods.

Distributism and Anarcho-Capitalism

Monday, January 14, 2013

“Too much capitalism does not mean too many capitalists, but too few capitalists.” -G.K. Chesterton

I’ve agreed to a correspondence with my friend Ryan Shinkel from [The Ironic Intellectual blog](#) on the matter of just economy. It shan’t surprise anyone that I will be defending anarcho-capitalism, but this time in response to the challenge of distributism. Before getting down to brass tacks, some definitions.

Anarchism is the simple absence of a state in society. And what is a state? A state is in essence an institution recognized by society to have the right to initiate aggression against individuals and institutions within that society. This is usually in the form of taxation, conscription, laws, and regulation, though I am quick to note that positive law and regulation is not in essence the initiation of aggression. An anarchist society is then simply void of any institution recognized to have the right of coercion.

There are two senses to capitalism. The first and most common sense is that of being related to free markets. The less that the state intervenes in the market, the more you have capitalism. The second sense, and this is the sense in which Chesterton is speaking in the quote above, is that of an economic model in which capital is more concentrated in the hands of a relatively few individuals. In this sense, a business owner, a financier, a banker, and those who are most definitively in control of the means of production are capitalists. I will be here using the second sense, and if I want to mean the first sense, I will simply use the term “free market.”

Finally, distributism is an economic model meant to be a third-way between capitalism and socialism. Where socialism entails a higher degree of state intervention in the market, distributism is otherwise (in theory, at least) antagonistic to achieving its ends by state force. However, it still calls for a lower concentration of capital, with the self-capitalized and co-operation models more widely in effect. Self-capitalization is where the labor own performs is done with those means of production that are also one’s own property, rather than being employed by another to use those means, and co-operation is the same except with the means of production being owned by many who all then share this capital for their labor.

What is a just economy, and which of these models is most in accord with it? As I understand justice in this context, an economy will be just in the case that all means employed for the production and distribution of goods and services respect the right to property. The most just economy will be entirely void of theft and coercion; neither employees nor employers will have a gun pointed at them forcing them to do something they wouldn’t otherwise.

This definition is, I note, without any reference to how property and the means of production are distributed. An economy in which everyone agrees to give his labor and goods to a single individual of their own free will is just, while an economy that achieves a perfectly equal distribution by the free will of every individual is just as well. I cannot see anything inherently unjust in one taking care to own some means of production and employing others to produce with it, even if this should make that individual abundantly wealthy while his laborers remain in the same poverty as the rest of society. I am, in other words, prepared to accept the

consequences of a completely free market, whether it be distributist or capitalist in flavor and only provided it is just, i.e. free from coercive intervention.

However, for that I yet believe that a free market anarcho-capitalist model will be both the most just and the most beneficial to society. My reasoning is very simple: the opportunity to enter the market and produce according to one's own provision of talent, willingness to work hard, and even plain luck will lead to a general increase in prosperity for all individuals. The same work will, in a society flush with capital and its production, net a higher income for the individual than an individual in a poorer society (ask how many fast food workers in the 50's could afford the internet). The opportunity to become wealthy by producing more for more people will bring wealth to all over time. Though the concentration of capital may be highly skewed, this is likely to happen simply due to division of labor and specialization. In regards to that, I see that a distributist model is more likely to be the case in a pre-industrial free market, but following the advent of high production through high investment in capital, the capitalist model will rule.

As such, I am not antagonistic to distributism (insofar as it is theoretically anti-statist, at least) so much as I don't believe it likely to achieve the most socially equitable distribution of wealth over time. The distributist model of production is, very simply, not able to produce as much as the capitalist model. If it could produce more than the capitalist model, then why aren't people more interested in employing it to increase their wealth? There is nothing clearly socially equitable by having a more equalitarian distribution of capital, and so I find distributism simply an outdated model of production, if ever it was actually in favor. There is, as my reply to Chesterton, no intrinsic problem with a small number of capitalists, especially if it frees more of us to gain more material, social, and intellectual wealth.

You can go read Ryan's post [here](#).

Comment on January 22, 2013:

[In response to these questions from "Josh": "(1) what restrains individuals/mobs/mob bosses from inflicting evil on one another in the absence of laws? (2) what restrains a statist from rising up and forcing a government upon the people of anarchyland? – how is the anarchy preserved? some social agreement? (3) what protects the anarchyland from rival states that do have well armed militaries – how does an anarchy keep from being a sitting duck?"]

"A state with restraint."

And what would that be? A super-state above that state, to act towards the state in a way that you wish for the state to act against villainous corporations?

1) It lacks likely profit. The job of security forces would be to make it too expensive for individuals and institutions to look to infringe against people's protections as a business model.

2) I would imagine a lack of support from most individuals who don't find it in their favor.

3) Like my answer for (1): security forces have the job of making it too expensive for states to think it profitable to conquer by force.

The Problem of Knowledge and Error

Wednesday, January 16, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/01/16/the-problem-of-knowledge-and-error/>

I am faced with a philosophical dilemma that is a product of my attempt to explain our ability to know. It is a dilemma I have found difficulty explaining in person, but perhaps the abstruseness of this problem can be overcome if I am allowed to develop the themes of knowledge and error.

The dilemma can be formulated as this: what explains *both* our ability to be correct and our ability to be wrong? It seems that, the stronger the explanation for one aspect, the weaker the explanation for the other. Yet humans are clearly capable of both. Or are they? Most have offered as an explanation human finiteness to explain error, but then to the degree to which this is taken to allow error to creep in perfectly unnoticed, on what account do we supposedly notice ourselves to be correct? On the other hand, if we explain our potency for knowledge by some perfection of the mind, how is this perfection rendered moot without our knowing it?

The dilemma is easier to see if I try my hand at explaining either. For knowledge, I would explain it by a perfection of the mind in that we are, by nature, [given to a semantical accordance](#) between [what there is and what there is to say](#). The shorthand version is that we as minds have intrinsic knowledge, and it is on this that we have experience and are able to reflect on it and gain further knowledge. But now, if we are given that, then how do we “forget ourselves” in order to be in error?

Now we might try to explain error by the finiteness of the human mind. We make simple calculation errors and mistake the relation between ideas and experience, producing beliefs which are in error. However, if that is how we explain error, how does this coincide with the previous account of how we’re able to know? It seems that, if we allow calculation errors to take place, then we cannot in principle allow a perfection of the mind to be the case, since it is the nature of such a perfection that either it is always in operation or else, if even only sometimes in operation, we have no means of detecting when it is and isn’t, since our means of detecting whether that perfection of knowledge-gaining is that same perfection, and certainly we must say that it is the nature of the calculation error that it mistakes itself for that perfection by which we otherwise gain knowledge.

This is the problem with trying to introduce a principle for each aspect of knowledge. The principles put each other in doubt. Whatever principle we use to explain knowledge doesn’t seem to let there be a principle to explain error, and vice versa. The only means of resolution is to have a single principle that explains both aspects; how we are able to be right and how we are able to be wrong. To that end, further posts will be coming as I try to resolve my dilemma. But I need to go deeper into my doubt so that my resolution is most firm, and my doubt does indeed go deeper.

I am fraught with the worry that our words are simply meaningless. To the extent that we are able to be wrong, our calculation errors seem to be the product of an imperfection in correlating between sign and signified. This doesn’t result in paradox, since the paradox only occurs from the standpoint of already assuming that we are able to mean things. If we can’t mean things, then that we are unable to conceive that state of affairs which correlates to such being the case

is *exactly the point*. We are unable to know it, which is what allows it to be the (inexplicable) case.

[But don't we seem to have a grasp of the world just by the fact that we recognize that there is this problem of whether we grasp the world?](#) Our ability to question our knowledge seems to require that we have some (intrinsic) knowledge. How are we able to know to question whether we know unless we have some idea of knowing? And isn't this itself a kind of knowing? This seems a problem for a nihilistic conclusion, though it seems the nihilist could very well say that, yes, there is a regularity to our thinking, but that doesn't show that our minds have some intrinsic link to the world. But this regularity is logical! Yes, and we call that regularity when it comes to moving bodies physics, and the regularity we find in extension we call geometry. That there is a regularity to a process doesn't mean it *means* anything; we might have a regularity of feelings at best.

If the truth is unthinkable, then it would follow that the truth meandered around above seems to reveal itself as sophistical circularity, but then that's exactly the point of it. And that's the problem. Why should truth, what there is, be powerless to uncover the emptiness of absence?

This Book is Full of Spiders: A Review

Monday, January 21, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/01/21/this-book-is-full-of-spiders-a-review/>

[This Book is Full of Spiders: Seriously Dude, Don't Touch It by David Wong](#) is a sequel to his cult hit [John Dies at the End](#). John Dies at the End (hereafter JDATE) is easily the funniest and scariest book I've ever read, and I would place it in my top five novels; if you haven't read it, I recommend it. They recently [made JDATE into a movie](#) as well, so that should speak to its cred (the movie is overall faithful to the material, but you should read the book for full effect). Seriously, read JDATE, I guarantee you will not be disappointed. If you enjoy philosophy, if you enjoy my blog, you will enjoy the book.

But I'm not here to review JDATE, I'm going to review This Book is Full of Spiders (hereafter TBIFOS). For that, though, it is inevitable that it will be contrasted to JDATE, which I must confess it pales to. Then again, considering JDATE is in my top five, this isn't saying anything very negative.

Using some Christmas gift cards, I bought a copy and received it last week, finishing it in three days. This speaks to the ability of the story to hold your attention to keep things going, and it definitely is a story that starts right off the bat and just keeps pushing until the very end. This is both a positive and a negative aspect of the novel. Whereas JDATE had a mixture of pacing that allowed for greater buildup at the end (and it really paid off, trust me), TBIFOS has only one pace: breakneck. The story sprints from beginning to end. While this certainly kept it entertaining, it precluded there being that much of a buildup, nor did you ever get those HOLY SHIT moments that are so memorable from JDATE when things change gear. There were no moments of epiphany in the story that made you need to take a breather and figure out what's going on. It's always very plain what's happening. It's ultimately a very simple story. Bad thing

happens, good guys have to take care of bad thing, bad guy gets in the way, bad guy gets taken care of.

But there's no build up to these things! I'm not giving a spoiler to mention that the event which sets things in motion occurs after the least of world building. Perhaps this isn't that much of a problem for someone who's already read JDATE, though it still seems that one could skip JDATE to read TBIFOS (but you shouldn't, because JDATE is amazing). Maybe TBIFOS would be more enjoyable to someone who hasn't already read JDATE, but is that a good thing? This is either because one hasn't been spoiled by how incredible JDATE was, or else because they aren't led to constantly compare the pacing between the two. There is virtually no information one needs from JDATE that isn't mentioned in passing again.

In fact, there seems no true continuity between the two. I think this might be what took a lot of the oomph out of TBIFOS. Whereas someone reading a sequel expects the narrative to be further developed, this is more like a serial. You have a common cast of characters and a common world, but what happened in previous episodes doesn't matter to the narrative contained within a single episode. There is no series-wide buildup towards the unmasking of an ultimate villain or ultimate problem, only a conjunction of disassociated events featuring characters who never need the same solution to the same problem. I think this is the source of my disappointment with the sequel. It's really more of a spinoff.

The book is neither scary nor funny. Whereas JDATE had me rolling on the ground in terror or laughter (not infrequently, at the same time), TBIFOS doesn't have any events or paragraphs that stick out in my memory with the same prescience. Perhaps what made JDATE so great simply cannot be recaptured, even by its author, or maybe it needed more time, but it is sadly not worth a reread or a recommendation.

Logic and Ontological Foundations

Wednesday, January 23, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/01/23/logic-and-ontological-foundations/>

Logic is the realm of possibility. For every given logically consistent statement, that statement gives a description of a possible state of affairs. The bare logical x means, in the fullest sense, "some possible particular thing or state of affairs." When we qualify the x , we do so by stating relations that hold between itself and other things, e.g. $x \bullet y$ means "the state of affairs in which both x and y are the case." x and y are, in order for the sentence to mean anything, the suppositum (the set of supposed things) of x and y must be possible things.

Why can we not, by x , posit an impossible thing or state of affairs? For instance, it seems one could say "By x I mean 'a square circle,' and putting this into a logical schema, I can derive logical deductions were the relations as described in any given schema." But to do so would render any given schema inconsistent. An impossible thing is a logically contradictory state of affairs. As such, any time one takes x to be an impossible thing, then we could always derive x and $\neg x$, since the supposition of x as a given impossible thing allows us to substitute that logically contradictory state of affairs for x , by which the contradiction is derived necessarily. For

example, when someone says they are doing this to prove that the suppositum can include impossibles

1) $x \cdot y$

2) x is a square circle

then we must be able to state the conditions under which a thing could be a square circle, and following logical deduction, reach the contradiction:

3) if a thing is a square, it is not a circle (def. of square)

4) if a thing is a circle, it is not a square (def. of circle)

5) x is not a square (from 2, 4)

6) x is not a circle (from 2, 3)

7) x is not a square circle (from 5, 6)

8) $\neg x$ (from 2, 7)

9) $\neg(x \cdot y)$ (from 1, 8)

Such would be the case for any logical sentence in which a variable is supposedly supposed to be an impossible thing or state of affairs. This is how I reach the conclusion that "logic is the realm of the possible." The inclusion of the impossible in things we are able to posit renders its own impossibility.

If logic is the realm of the possible, we must ask what makes a thing to be a possible. For any given possibility, an ontologically real thing must ground that possibility. It cannot be the case that a thing is groundless, i.e. to assert that nothing grounds its possibility, because this is to attribute to nothing a power it does not have. Insofar as there is something that grounds possibilities, then logic must by this have something to do with what grounds possibilities. In other words, logic, because it necessarily requires there to be a realm of possible things in order that it might be posited, is ontologically grounded; the possibility of logic is itself something to be explained, and this by an ontologically real thing. The reality of logic implies the reality of an ontology.

This is, I might note, a very similar sort of argument to my [Modal Set Ontological Argument](#), and this serves to make logic a beginning point for that kind of ontological argument, since I can, with the argument above, go from logic to possibility to ontologically real things. This is the sort of reasoning, I believe, is implicitly appealed to in every true ontological argument, and may also provide a reason why mathematicians, who are constantly at work with mathematics, tend to be Platonists. It is also [why atheists tend to attribute to nothing the power to do anything](#), because that might just be what it takes to deny the existence of God (i.e. to say that nothing is something).

The Positive Problem of Logical Positivism

Monday, January 28, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/01/28/the-positive-problem-of-logical-positivism/>

One problem of logical positivism is that it is self-defeating. When you have meaning in a sentence be the conditions in which it could be observed true (or false), then you leave yourself without the means of making it meaningful. Ergo, logical positivism is, by its own standard, meaningless.

There is a positive problem with logical positivism which can be identified as well. Consider a sentence which is verifiable. "There is a pink unicorn on the dark side of the moon." For such a sentence, we can easily conceive the conditions in which we would determine whether it is true or false, i.e. we just look at the dark side of the moon for a pink unicorn. This raises the question of how we know that, and can state it as such, seeing as it is clearly unable to be observed. I cannot have an observation relevant to what observation is relevant to the truth of the sentence.

If my knowledge of what observations are relevant to the truth/falsity of sentences isn't able to be verified, then the whole enterprise is unable to get off the ground unless it starts with the acceptance of a priori knowledge, which is clearly contradictory to logical positivism.

The Use of Philosophy

Tuesday, January 29, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/01/29/the-use-of-philosophy/>

I am, due to an administrative technicality, taking an introduction to philosophy class this semester. It is, at least, an easy A. It is also a worthy review of why I'm in philosophy at all.

What is the use of philosophy, after all? It will not help put food on the table (at least, not in the likely sense). It cannot improve productivity nor can it heal disease. All the suffering of the body cannot be cured by philosophy. But, and this is an aspect of its worth, the suffering of the body can be placed in perspective by philosophy. What use is suffering? Philosophy can provide spiritual relief. Suffering without this is ultimately meaningless; as life is suffering, life without this perspective afforded by philosophy is meaningless. We cannot know ourselves, what we do, or what we are here for without stepping back and enjoining in the virtue of the mind.

Philosophy does not, for that, solve problems. What objects of knowledge has philosophy won for us? Virtually none. While an individual philosopher might point to what beliefs the practice of philosophy has brought him to (in my case, theism, political anarchism, and social conservatism), there is no consensus among philosophers. In fact, philosophers seem to thrive on disputes. Philosophers are uniform in nothing except a love of inquiry, which is something, but it isn't hard to see why philosophy is likened to intellectual masturbation. All this dispute, all this inquiry, and what have philosophers gained for the world at the end of the day?

If anything, philosophy is always bringing us one step forward, two steps back. As my own perception of the problems of philosophy is honed, I feel less and less certain. The only thing that precludes my retreat from society at all is that I am intent on changing the world. I may

understand better than others my own ignorance, but that is a reason for action; to demarcate where the world might be improved, where we are better off letting things be. The certainty of others in their ignorance calls to be undermined.

Yet I am worried that I do philosophy to stroke my ego. Knowing more than others is a point of pride. But how can I know to find humility except by philosophy? Humility without knowledge to back it up is empty, easy to achieve and, I suspect, itself a point of pride for others. Is humility even worth seeking? Questions for philosophy to answer, with an answer I do not yet know.

I do not think philosophy can be explained to the vulgar. The vulgar are those who seek to merely get through life, perhaps acquiring some toys and some women, but always without an understanding as to why they seek these things or why they are empty to possess. I do not want to merely get through life, I want to live. How is that to be done? I don't know, but I feel that trying to figure out how is part of it.

Philosophy may not be worth defending. If one requires that it be defended, they are beyond seeing the use of philosophy at all, seeing as they can't recognize it in themselves. And to those who inquire with honesty, recognize it within themselves and are brought by the question to the answer. The why to do philosophy can only be answered individually, for oneself, and not by another.

This is perhaps the point of division for philosophy. All philosophical knowledge is something that must be gained and understood for oneself. There is no repository where I might be taught and simply accept what is taught as true. In fact, that would be contrary to the spirit of philosophy. Whatever in philosophy aims to be accepted, aims to be accepted on the merit of its truth perceived by every individual for himself. As such, progress is not cumulative in the way science might proceed, but an individual spiritual occurrence. Philosophy is an individualistic pursuit. A "collectivist" philosophy, that preaches conformity for its own sake, is contrary to philosophy and breeds indolent ideology and decay. Is this not why philosophy falters in those societies deprived of an appreciation for the individual, the rebel, the "lone man crying out in the wilderness?" I do not think it is any accident that philosophy took root in the West, nor that our philosophical traditions have found so little to gain from the East. Nor do I think it is an accident that philosophy has entered into stagnation as the West eats out its own heart.

I do not think we will ever reach the pinnacle of human society. There shall be no society of philosopher kings, after we have eliminated the world of all suffering and evil. If anything, doing so might remove any need for further reflection. If we do not suffer, then why should we care to ask "why?" On the other hand, [perhaps philosophy will at that point reveal itself to all who perceive the emptiness of material pleasures](#), as the ease of gain becomes its own suffering. Life might ultimately reveal itself to be suffering wherever we turn that is not informed by a philosophical perspective, that causes us to seek out our happiness with understanding. And this may be the use of philosophy to man; not to gain material pleasures, but to perceive happiness beyond it.

Reason and Paradox

Friday, February 8, 2013

I have in mind a concern with paradoxes. In this case, I do not refer merely to everything which was ever called a paradox, but those paradoxes which are philosophically interesting. Some intellectual quibbles are called paradoxes merely because they are contrary to our supposed intuition: for instance, you have the “paradox of Giffen goods,” i.e. goods which increase in demand as their price increases. This is, however, a phenomena easy to explain, and no hard problem presents itself.

I am interested in whether there are any truly recalcitrant paradoxes. I am interested because they appear to present not merely interesting, non-intuitive phenomena, but are instances of reason against itself. Paradox is from the Greek for “against belief,” but I would call these particular paradoxes “pararatio.” That is, “against reason.” My interest in them is because they seem to present a failure of reason to grasp the world, and may in fact completely undermine reason.

If there is one true contradiction, all truth should be undermined. Logic would be pointless, or at least, pointless after it dictates that anything should be proven from that contradiction. It is called by logicians [the principle of explosion](#).

A truly recalcitrant paradox would present a failure of reason, because inasmuch as we take logic to be the structure of thought, these snags of thought would be the product of a flawed reason. A perfect reason should not, by its own internal structure, be trapped in irresolvable singularities of thought. A singularity of thought, a true pararatio, would prove the shortcoming of reason.

So, are there any truly recalcitrant paradoxes? I do not think there can be. Whatever apparent pararatios there are, must have some means of resolution by analysis. Our ability to understand the threat of pararatio seems to indicate that there are not any pararatios, since an imperfect reason should not be able to detect its potential shortcomings in this manner.

Comment on February 10, 2013:

A pararatio requires that it be a problem with reason. If our reason of itself leads to these conclusions, then they are the interesting sort of paradox. I think these are interesting paradoxes, though I also think they are resolvable and give me no great fear that they are true pararatios.

Comment on February 13, 2013:

I mean that we can show how the paradox is only apparent, and can be either avoided (by showing how we don't need to commit to the premises that lead to the singularity) or else shown to be not a singularity of thought at all.

What Limits the Government?

Monday, February 11, 2013

Most, when defending the state, are of the confusion that they support a “limited government.” They say “Oh, well I wouldn’t want the government to have *that* power, only *these* powers,” as though a governing body granted the power of ultimate and exclusive judicial power over a territory wasn’t itself ultimately in the position to make that choice for itself. Speaking as a matter of essence, and not mere practice or accident, a government cannot be limited, since it is a matter of theory that what enforces its own limits could only be itself.

[This is a matter I’ve already spoken of before](#), though naturally without much effect to statist. Then again, I’m under the impression that there is virtually nothing that could impress a statist. I daresay the indoctrination of children is effective. When you’re raised all your life to believe that the state and democracy is good, and the state tells you it’s better than the others because it’s a “limited government,” what else is there to believe? It’s difficult to form new beliefs unless you’ve heard of them before, and those who would speak out against the matter on moral grounds tend to be self-disenfranchising on that very account! So I hardly blame statist for having hard heads in this area, even if it is frustrating to run up against this article of pure faith time and again.

This is why I laughed when [Andrew Napolitano asked “Did you consent to a government that can kill whom it wishes?”](#) As a matter of course nobody *consented* to such a government, but then again, nobody consented to *any* government. *This is what it is to be a government*. The idea of government is that it can control, regulate, tax, conscript, penalize, fine, imprison, detain, and even kill me *expressly without my consent*. A government that needed consent from those whom it chooses to *victimize* prosecute is hardly up to the job of providing judicial services, let alone *ultimate* judicial services. The only permission the government need ever seek (according to the government, that is, and even then, not really) is from itself. There is an absurdity in that, if I believe I am wronged by the government, it is that same government which decides whether it has wronged me. (How ironic that this absurdity is never noted, even when it’s the very subject of an opinion piece. The work of indoctrination goes far enough that the idea of questioning the theoretical legitimacy of government is never entertained.) This is why I find it so curious that my friend worries about a monopoly judicial-security force coming about in an anarchical society, when having such a thing is what it is to be a statist society!

So, does the government have permission to kill whom it wishes? That’s up to the government. It may just so happen to not allow itself (this time), but should we consider that an essential limit on the government? No. Am I *essentially* limited from lying just because I choose, at some point, to not lie? Hardly. A body which is only limited by itself in some respect is, in other words, unlimited in that respect. A limit is only such in the case that it is limited by something external to itself, but in this case, since we supposedly require an *ultimate* arbitrator (i.e. a court of final decision-making authority, backed by force if necessary), whatever acts to actually limit it from fulfilling this role leaves you either without a government (and I’m okay with that) or else another government.

Do you believe individuals have the right to not consent to a government? That is, do you believe there is a right to secession? [Then you are a proto-anarchist](#), which I understand might be a scary term to be described, since there is nothing scarier than the disorder and chaos of anarchism, even if one only means they have the right to abjure from being forced to be a

member of some group. If you believe that the government has the right to govern expressly without the consent of even one of its members, then you are a Hobbesian absolutist. Is that scary? Why, yes it is (but that's why I'm not a statist).

On the other hand, I can show you an out. For all intents and purposes I do believe in limiting the government. It just so happens that the only limited government is the total absence of one, i.e. no ultimate judicial authority over a territory.

Strong and Weak Conceptions of Political Authority

Thursday, April 18, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/02/11/what-limits-the-government/>

What is the purpose of political authority per se? It appears that the supposed purpose of political authority (hereafter just "authority") is only to compel obeisance with laws that no private individual or group would be in the right to compel obeisance to. It depends quite crucially on authority being magical, i.e. being possessed of a right to bring forcible compulsion in line with the laws maintained by that authority *pointedly aside from the content of those laws*. In other words, the purpose of authority is the right to compel regardless of the laws that authority is compelling obedience to.

I will use "compulsion" here to mean specifically backing up a law/rule/demand with the actual use or threat to use violence. This applies to any use of violence or threat of violence, and is here morally neutral. A mugger who holds you up at gunpoint in an alley is using compulsion, and firing a gun at said mugger in self-defense is also compulsion. Compulsion is not necessarily moral or immoral. I believe at times it can be justified, and sometimes even required. For instance, I find the case of defending a child from a murderer by the use of compulsion not only justified, but required, in which the negligence to use compulsion as a means of rescuing the child is gravely immoral.

An individual who maintains that the state has its authority due to the content of the laws it enforces by compulsion is neither a realist nor defending an adequately strong conception of authority. If it is only the content of a law/demand justifies compulsion, then it follows that any individual or organization is equally justified in using compulsion to secure obedience. The purpose of an authority is to define and exclude others from deciding what counts as a matter of rightful compulsion. If any person is justified in using compulsion on the basis of its content (e.g. defense of a third party from harm), then authority is not required, and it would be wrong to interfere with those who use compulsion in those cases when it is justified or even required (e.g. it would be immoral for the state to stop me from using compulsion to defend my child from a murderer). Authority that is founded on the content of its laws/demands is too weak to justify the concept of the state, and the individual would be justified in violating laws for which the content do not in themselves justify compulsion, such as laws against drug use or even taxation.

Why taxation? I think it clear that even from a statist perspective one accepts that an individual is only obliged to give over what is asked of him by the tax code. If I am only taxed at 10% on

my income, I am justified in giving only 10% and no more. If there is a tax break that allows pretax income put towards healthcare to remain untaxed, then I am justified in not including any income used for healthcare as taxable income.

What the statist requires is a strong conception of authority to make this notion of taxation get off the ground. What this requires is that authority justifies compulsion regardless of the content of the laws/demands. In other words, the authority is justified to use compulsion precisely where a private individual would not. The content can still justify (for instance, self-defense remains justified), but the state gains its authority not from the content of the laws it enforces, but something else. In other words, it is not the content of the law that justifies its enforcement, but the authority of the enforcer that justifies its enforcement. Citizens are obliged to obedience of the laws not for the content of those laws, but for the authority of that organization which enforces them.

This would get drug laws and taxation justified.

However, a number of objection can be brought forward, for such a conception of authority seems too strong.

For one, it seems that one cannot realistically argue likewise that some content cannot be justified by the authority. If I can be obliged to give over whatever amount of property the state demands, what prohibits that authority from legitimizing murder? After all, if taxation, because it is done by the authority, is not theft, then why should killing, because it is done by the authority, be murder? That is, *the very idea of the authority is that the moral demands which hold for a private individual do not maintain for the political authority.*

The private individual is (generally*) not justified in taking another's property by compulsion, for that would be theft. The authority, when taking another's property by compulsion, does not engage in theft. This would allow to find, by the same form of argument, that when the state kills, it does not engage in murder. If done by the private individual, yes, it would be murder, but remember that we're speaking of an organization that is specifically granted the special moral right to engage in actions which it would be wrong for private individuals to do.

The only way it seems that authority could be circumscribed in order to prohibit killing that would for a private individual be murder is to grant a weak conception of authority, i.e. that it is the content of the law/demand that justifies its enforcement, which as argued above is too weak to support the state. If we grant the legitimacy of the state to kill on the basis of no content in its demand/laws, this is stronger than most statist wish to admit, as it is but absolutism, i.e. the state is justified to do *anything*.

Yet it seems binary, in that we are forced to either anarchism or absolutism. ["Limited government" is incoherent.](#)

Here is another objection, which I will only sketch for now and come back to later. If authority is not justified by the content of its laws/demands, then what does justify it? It is not a social contract (for I certainly dissent, yet my dissent counts for naught as I will be taxed, regulated, and even arrested anyway despite my disagreement). It does not seem that the authority is given by God (though I would, as a Catholic, recognize God's authority to compel obedience, including the right to vest that authority in others). Where does it come from? Is right simply might? That is altogether too simplistic, yet it seems the only thing one might point to. What

precisely (in the moral sense) prohibits someone from starting a rival government within the same territory and competing with its service? What justifies the government's elimination of rivals? What initially justifies authority?

Now an individual might just countenance absolutism, if they really think anarchism is worse. Yet I imagine most would prefer the lack of rule to an absolute rule; and if absolute rule is the only internally consistent position for political authority, that leaves only anarchism.

New York Times: The Pope Believes Catholicism is “True”

Monday, February 11, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/02/11/new-york-times-the-pope-believes-catholicism-is-true/>

As you will have heard by now, it was announced that the Pope will be resigning his office. If you're hoping to hear some theological analysis about this matter, I'm sorry, I actually don't have a lot to say. Undoubtedly there will be theological ramifications and this portends a shift in Catholic culture at least as far as Popes serving until death goes, but I can't forecast anything specific.

What I'm interested in is [this article from the New York Times](#) about the event. While of course it is in the most general of terms and includes a smattering of “in case you haven't been around in 20 years, here are some issues the Catholic Church faces,” and naturally the comments are filled with the very worst sort of pontificating and moralizing concerning the failures of many bishops in their handling of child abuse, my focus is one on particular line that I find hilariously indicative of the sort of understanding possessed by writers at the NYT, or at least what sort of understanding they expect their readership to hold. I present this line:

When he took office, Pope Benedict's well known stands included the assertion that Catholicism is 'true' and other religions are 'deficient.'

Yes, readers, get a load of that! The Pope of the Catholic Church believes that Catholicism is “true.” Think that over for a moment.



“true”

Now perhaps they didn’t mean that to come out so awkwardly, but that only makes it all the more breathtaking. What could explain such an odd description of the Pope being just, kinda sorta, coincidentally, *Catholic*? What sort of worldview do these writers hold?

It is that shocking to be Catholic in the modern world? Perhaps, and this is just an illustration of that. Being Catholic is so shocking that when one believes it to be *true*, such a belief can’t even really be attributed to the man in question. Or is the NYT such a rag of postmodern dreck that they can’t speak of truth as though it were a thing? Might this support the contention that without religious truth, there is nothing which is true? If our present bastion of progressive culture, the New York frickin’ Times (for Chrissake!), can’t even let the Pope believe that Catholicism is *true*, can anyone? Or is Catholicism so far beyond the fold, so far on the fringe, so remote, so removed from culture, that the NYT not only feels it must undertake the burden of pointing out that the Pope believes Catholicism is “true” (*in case you probably weren’t aware*), but can only do so in the most non-committal, circumlocutory, *dissociative* manner?

This seems ominous.

Knowledge Isn’t Important

Monday, February 18, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/02/18/knowledge-isnt-important/>

There is no question more superfluous in the whole of philosophy than “But do you know that?” To ask whether we know is to ask whether we can go beyond the lines of reasoning and evidence we can walk through. How could one know except by the reasoning they are able to see? What could there be beyond that?

On one hand, we have the skeptic, who declares, to some extent that “we lack knowledge about the world.” In what way is this important? They say “When you speak of the world, you can’t know that it’s really there.” I don’t see why this is. When I speak of the world before me, why must I mean anything beyond “I am being appeared to world-ly?” This leaves apart the question

of ontology, i.e. whether the world is “really there” or not, and frankly I’m not even sure that saying the world is “really there” means anything at all. If you’re “really there” or not, I’m going to act the same way, and what am I but the way in which I choose to act? Everything which it is important to know, the elements of a priori knowledge and myself, are beyond doubt, so what needs to be saved? I know I exist, I know God exists, and I really need nothing else.

On the other hand, we have the gnostic. This is the one who claims to have some means of knowing, a line of reasoning which leads them to conclude that they know the world is “really there.” What does it mean to say the world is “really there?” Something like “If our experience was determined by a demon, such that our experience didn’t correspond to the world out there, what there is wouldn’t be ‘really there.’” I mean no misrepresentation, but it doesn’t seem that we can get an independent definition of what “really there” is at all. It relies on a circularity, i.e. the world I experience is how I know it to be possible in this form, but what if the form presented to me isn’t formed by its reality? But there must be some reality to it, otherwise there shouldn’t be an experience to it; I don’t see what reason there is to grant the possibility of polyvalent experiences, i.e. experiences that could have a multiplicity of sources, which leaves us with the problem of “getting behind” our experience to know what really causes it.

I do not mean some indifference to the world. Where one’s reasoning leads them to believe, they ought to follow. But how can I “get behind” my reasoning? My reasoning is itself the testimony I must rely upon. There is simply no means of questioning it: reasoning is beyond doubt. If I doubt it, I’m only engaging in it again. It responds to a challenge against it by being its own challenge, and is thus clarified. Reason baptizes itself. Reason is not a veil covering up the world, it is the pure experience thereof, and unknowable apart therefrom.

This is why it is not knowledge that is important, but reason, for knowledge is merely the result of reasoning. We can keep asking “But do you really know?” but what we mean is “Why is our reason such?” which can only be answered by pointing back to the act of reasoning. And there is nothing else to be done, nothing else that can be asked.

Comment on February 19, 2013:

Knowledge is merely a precondition of reasoning, not an end in itself. We gather knowledge not for itself, but for what knowledge does for us, for how it helps us to achieve our ends. As such, it may have a derived importance, but it certainly isn’t important in-itself, as the skeptic and the gnostic seem to make it out.

Degrees of Understanding and God

Monday, February 18, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/02/18/degreess-of-understanding-and-god/>

For any given belief p , whatever is implied by p (including that which is implied by some relation with other beliefs) must also be rudimentarily understood to some degree, no matter how slight, such that the complete absence of any degree of understanding of the implied concepts means that one has no degree of understanding of p . That is, if we suppose I say that I understand the notion of addition, then I have the foundations necessary to understanding multiplication in

place as well, which means I must have some degree of understanding of multiplication implicit in my knowledge of addition. Whoever, in explaining addition, couldn't, when brought to understand multiplication, see that the concept of addition is foundational to multiplication and is implicitly captured in addition (for indeed, multiplication is merely the multiple addition of some number by itself), has a lesser degree of understanding of addition; contrariwise, a better degree of understanding of addition yields a higher degree of understanding of multiplication (indeed, where else did the idea of multiplication come from?).

This might seem troubling for, after all, this seems to imply that we have less than a perfect understanding of such basic things as " $1 + 1 = 2$." Well, yes, that does seem to me to be the case, though it hardly obviates our saying "we *know* that ' $1 + 1 = 2$ '", only that it is known to greater and lesser degrees in different people. The mathematician who understands not only the rules of addition but Peano arithmetic, calculus, and topology clearly, in grasping what else is implied of these simple mathematical truths has a higher degree of understanding of $1 + 1 = 2$, since he sees more clearly what else it implies of itself. To see what a thing implies is to see a thing for itself; this is like saying that a person who understands that Aesop's Fables is less about talking animals and more timeless truths really sees what it's about, while the person who can't get past the talking animals to the general truths implied understands it less.

Now take God. I think this is a way for us to understand why, on the one hand, our knowledge of God is implicit in everything, and so indeed we know Him in everything, but on the other hand, by knowing Him in everything we know Him least of all. God founds the possibility of everything, and this in virtue of His own selfsame being. To understand God more fully, then, is to understand what He implies; and to understand what is implied by His being in turn becomes some rarefied understanding of Him, removed by some steps of abstraction. This makes God the most difficult to know and in fact unlike everything else known, for one cannot distinguish what is implied and what isn't implied, since the totality of everything possible is implied, and whatever isn't implied isn't anything to be meant or thought of anyhow; an idea of God contains within it the beginning of an understanding of everything possible. The more we see how little we understand what is implied by God, the more we see how little we really understand Him.

The Purpose of Liberty

Thursday, February 21, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/02/21/the-purpose-of-liberty/>

I've been thinking of how to answer the question "What is liberty?" but I realize that I haven't been trying to answer from the right foundation. As I have spoken of elsewhere, a thing is known by that which is its intent, or telos. If I know a thing's end, I know the thing. I believe this can include concepts, e.g. the purpose of set theory is to provide a description and system of abstract setwise relations.

If I want to answer what liberty is, then, I must answer its purpose. What is the purpose of liberty? What does society gain if we allow people their freedom to act as they will within the confines of property, without any encumbrances of statism?

I think we can begin to see the answer if we look at what people lose with statism. Wherever the burden of the state falls on people, a penalty is applied to the accumulation of some form of wealth, be that material, intellectual, leisurely, and so on. After all, to put it plainly and in a way that people seem to forget, a tax *taxes*: synonyms for tax are *strain*, *pressure*, *imposition*, and *burden*. Why do we punish crime with fines and imprisonment? Because this is an imposition meant to be costly to the individual to make them reconsider their actions. The effect of the confiscation of time and wealth is the same, whether it is applied for criminal wrongdoing or merely for the accident of having an income. What is taxed, you have less of.

In the modern state, what tends to get taxed? Higher incomes by individuals and corporations. There is, I daresay, a correlation of human excellence with higher income. After all, what social problems the conservative (like myself) is concerned with are high rates of divorce, single motherhood, abortion, drug abuse, homosexuality, and so on, are all correlated with lower income. *These problems affect those of higher income less*. I would not argue that higher income is the cause of this (or vice versa, that lower income is the cause of these problems), but that these variables are dependent on the one and same value of the individual's time preference. Time preference is how one tends to weigh the present against the future. Those who give up more present consumption in order to gain greater consumption in the future have a lower time preference. Low time preference is a prerequisite of high income and *excellence*. As such, when we tax the virtue of low time preference, we incentivize activities of higher time preference.

I believe, then, that liberty is conducive to, on one hand, higher incomes and excellence. Where the state punishes such excellence, a free society is in favor of no such thing. The excellent are free to pursue their excellencies.

There is another side to this as well. The modern state does not only tend to tax higher income more strenuously, but it also tends to subsidize and alleviate the cost of poverty. The same principle cuts in this instance: if penalizing (making the cost greater) an activity disincentivizes it, then subsidizing (making the cost lesser) an activity incentivizes it.

And low income is correlated to vice in the same way high income is to virtue. Low income is a product of high time preference; it comes about by the systematic preference of present consumption over greater future consumption in the future. If we incentivize high time preference, we incentivize vice.

Dare I say that rising rates of single motherhood may be explained, not so much by crumbling morals, but by our incentivizing of it by the alleviation of its costs? We punish virtue to subsidize vice. This is the modus operandi of the modern state, this is its means to the acquisition of power. (Why else do you think we give one person one vote? When voting what's for dinner, there are two wolves for every sheep.)

This is why I am led to believe that the purpose of liberty is excellence. There will be no constraints on low time preferences, and as such no constraints on virtue. The great shall be allowed to be great, and the least shall be allowed to be least. I acknowledge this is an elitist position to take, but it is obvious that egalitarianism, the "cause of the poor," has the cost of

kneecapping society and precluding the great to rise to their positions. The poor will always be with us, but I do not see why we must take this as a reason to never let anyone have wealth, be it materially, intellectually, or artistically.

Comment on February 21, 2013:

I meant that there is a correlation of high income and excellence, which is why I pointed to lower rates of divorce, single motherhood, and abortion among those of high income. It is not that high income is the kind of excellence I am intent on (though I will admit it certainly qualifies as a material form of excellence, and is, all other things held equal, preferable to poverty), it is merely the correlation between high income and excellence stemming from low time preference, which I consider a virtue. Low time preference might also be called prudence.

Comment on February 25, 2013:

I think your interpretation of the parable concerning the rich man who stores up his wealth is shallow, especially if we consider the praise he heaps on the low time preference demonstrated by the servant in the parable of the talents. Perhaps “Plan for the future, but be ready to go now” would be more apt. Seems that virtue requires low time preference, since it involves giving up present pleasures for greater rewards at a later time (or was Jesus wrong to say “store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven?”).

“Wise stewardship and frugality”—so you mean prudence, right?

I said material wealth is one form of excellence, but clearly my emphasis is on intellectual, artistic, and moral forms. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with wealth, or else being banished from the Garden wouldn't have been a punishment.

Children and Anarchism, Part 1

Monday, February 25, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/02/25/children-and-anarchism-part-1/>

It seems so often that one defends their liberalism by appealing to the children, as though because a prescribed [socioeconomic arrangement](#) is acknowledged to have some shortcoming, this defaults our justification to a liberal-socialist order no matter what other its problems may be. I will here do what I can to show what shortcomings there may be to anarchism but show how they are acceptable costs in comparison to the costs of (statist) intervention ostensibly to “solve” these shortcomings.

But first, I want to point out what will not be a cost, though others might expect it to be due to having been raised in the thrall of these assumptions. The most obvious response is, I reckon, that without the state there wouldn't be public schools. While the upper and middle classes would be perfectly able to pay, what of those in poverty? Wouldn't this work to perpetuate the cycle, since poor children would have no access to school whatsoever?

A legitimate concern, I grant, but also definitely influenced by those formative years. Presently, private school is seen as a luxury afforded only by the wealthy and those lucky enough to

receive scholarships. But this is certainly due to the fact that, when one is already taxed to pay for something that is then given “for free,” one isn’t keen to give up one’s forcibly invested resources. If I made you buy food from me at gunpoint, even if it were of lower quality would you throw it away and go on to spend more money on better food? Perhaps, but you can see that it is unlikely.

Historically, public education only became available after private education was prevalent (much like child labor laws were introduced after child labor had drastically declined). Education for children is, after all, available above a certain level of prosperity, and it would be virtually impossible to offer it unless that prosperity were already in place. The state couldn’t offer public education unless there were generally enough money possessed by families to pay for their own education anyway. Furthermore, education was generally subsidized by a number of churches, especially the Catholic and Anglican. In fact, under the state’s province education has become increasingly more expensive per pupil to static effect. Given the state’s virtual monopoly on the education of the young, this is hardly unexpected. Even so, legislatures are reluctant to reform the school system to offer [the quasi-market solution of choice](#).

Why is this? It is, I reckon, for a variety of reasons.

The first and, I reckon, the most important reason is because, for the state, education is not the purpose of public schooling. If it were, the politicians should be excitable about the state of education, especially since quality of education has remained stagnant since the 50’s. They would think of it as a problem. What are their solutions? Top-down, expensive, bureaucratic, and ultimately ineffective programs. And the programs found to be effective (e.g. school choice, i.e. letting the parents have more say over the education of their children)? Shrug.

The purpose of public schooling is to make good citizens. It’s the best explanation. Why do you think the United States government’s interest in public schooling must be different than North Korea’s? Consider: when we learn that Socrates was killed by a democracy, it’s looked over as inconsequential. From 1st grade through high school, American history (and an extremely white-washed version at that) is trumpeted. Teachers are, more often than not, liberals (this shouldn’t be surprising; in every regime the teachers are liberals) intent on forming the minds of the young to their own ideology.

The purpose of public schooling is indoctrination. Nothing more, nothing less. The actual provision of education is accidental; this is why stagnant quality is acceptable and the preferences of parents can be laid aside.

This is a monumental cost of public education that can’t be ignored. Giving the state paramount ability to form the minds of the young to its own purposes is monumental and, no matter how “free” the country may otherwise be, downright Orwellian, whether explicitly propagandist or mildly ideological. Why would any parent accept this state of affairs, unless they were indoctrinated to believe it acceptable that others have more right to the formation of their own children’s understanding of the world, or [they were threatened with force](#)?

For all that, in a truly free society where parents have the first right over the education of their children, there may be those who fail to have access to school. This would be, however, exceedingly rare, and it is worth pointing out that children with such shitty parents rarely do well even with the education provided them anyhow. Public education is no benefit except in the sense that a jail cell provides the benefit of a roof over one’s head. It is an extravagant social

(apart from the financial) cost which is a toll on the formation of young minds and cripples the ability of children to think and parents to teach.

Children may happen to learn to read and write at these institutions of ideology, but that's only because it is both easy and necessary to ideologize. The state would provide a ("free") cup of rice everyday to these students if it thought it would benefit the programming of doublethink, and doubtless one might then appeal to this as evidence of the good of public education. (Yet so many think it distasteful for churches to evangelize in addition to providing material charity.)

As such, I find the social costs of public education to far outweigh its benefits, and the social costs of private education (under anarchism) to be far outweighed by its benefits. If anything, the appeal to children in this case favors anarchism, not statism.

The Coherence of Meta-Knowledge

Sunday, March 3, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/03/03/the-coherence-of-meta-knowledge/>

This will be a loosely structured post, I'm just trying to generate some thinking on the topic of meta-knowledge, i.e. knowing that you know, for a paper I will write soon.

It seems to me that a quality of a sound epistemological theory must be that it explains how we're able to have meta-knowledge. This is based on my assumption that the set of possibly knowable things includes all true descriptions of states of affairs in the world, and since an agent's knowledge that x is the case is just such a state of affairs in the world, that agent's knowledge can be known of. In short, my knowing-x is a state of affairs y, and since for all states of affairs they are possibly knowable, y is possibly knowable, which extends to the fact that I can possibly know-I-know-x. The possibility of meta-knowledge seems trivial.

But I really want to push on this. It seems there is a good objection to meta-knowledge lurking about, but in providing that objection, one would actually serve to prove the reality of some meta-knowledge, proving the general possibility of meta-knowledge. This is because, for any objection against meta-knowledge, one must engage with a description of the process by which we come to know things at all in order to see that the process somehow cannot be put on itself, but in doing so one must acknowledge they are going through that very process. One must know this process in order for the objection to have any strength (since an objection based on a misconception of the process would clearly be void), which equates to knowing how one comes to know, in which case one would know when they know something because they would understand when that process has been soundly fulfilled.

However, this brings the balance back further than I'm intending. If any possible objection to meta-knowledge is refuted with the acknowledgment that knowing the process of knowledge-gaining entails meta-knowledge, then we seem to be brought to the [KK Thesis](#). But it seems problematic to say that your knowing-x requires knowing that you know-x.

For one, we seem to require the possibility of bare first-order knowledge (i.e. knowing-x without knowing that you know-x) in order to make sense of the KK Thesis at all. If the first-order

knowing collapses into second-order knowing (and that into third-order knowing, and so on ad infinitum), then we might as well just say first-order knowing *is* second-order knowing, but then what do we mean when we say that we know that we know *x*, when to know that we know *x* is to know that we know that know? I wouldn't say this is somehow a psychological impossibility (i.e. I can't consciously acknowledge such an ordering of my knowledge), but it runs up against logical indeterminacy, such that I literally know a thing only in the case that I know it, and vice versa, without any other conditions on my knowledge. Ergo, there seems to be the possibility of bare first-order knowledge, which denies the KK Thesis. In other words, we can know something without knowing that we know it.

But on the other hand, if we allow bare first-order knowledge, such that we can fail to know that we know something, why can't we allow bare second-order knowledge? This would mean that we can fail to know that we know that we know something. In fact, this could go on to infinity, such that for an *n*th-order knowledge, at *n*+1 we could lack knowledge that we possess such *n*th-order knowledge.

I think we can get around the problem in this way. The insight meant to be captured by meta-knowledge is that we can possibly stand in a relation to our knowledge such that we are conscious of not only our possessing a belief in such a state of affairs for such and such justificatory reasons, but that those reasons bring certitude to our belief so that we cannot fail to be wrong. In other words, while we might have knowledge which we "don't know" we have, we can "know" at other times that we possess knowledge. We might call it witting and unwitting knowledge. It is witting knowledge when one stands in a relation to their knowledge such that they understand the certitude of their belief, and unwitting knowledge when they lack that understanding regarding such certitude. This has, I believe, something to do with an understanding regarding the process that secures knowledge and knowing whether that process has been fulfilled in the acquiring of some given belief, but I can allow that there might be some other way of stating how the relation obtains.

That is the insight meant to be captured by the KK Thesis, or at least so I would argue.

Mystical Atheism and Other Future Iterations

Monday, March 4, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/03/04/mystical-atheism-and-other-future-iterations/>

It never seems to occur to many how contingent their beliefs and understandings are on the zeitgeist. Their beliefs and motives are all strings pulled by some obfuscated historical force, yet they believe themselves to be entirely self-formed; influenced maybe, but their beliefs are entirely their own. They do not merely repeat catchy slogans, Sagan's claim that "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence" really is sound, dang it! Or so they say.

This is the problem with those who do not understand the heritage of their thought. They stand up as examples of the age, never forming a prototypical belief, never gaining an understanding of the world that came of their own thought. This is not just about atheists, as the title might seem to imply, though I have them in my focus.

Atheism in the present age is descended from that of Hobbes, d'Holbach, and Hume. This makes the philosophical tradition mere centuries old. All the power of the tradition appears to come from the oft-claimed, though little established, supposition that atheism is congruent with the naturalist methodology of science, and as science is successful, so it must provide some evidential backing to atheism. What is never contemplated is the possibility of a philosophical shift, yet again. The mechanistic view of the world is becoming stagnant, and is under siege by atheist and theist alike. Who is to say that theism is not to become the most apparently congruent with science? Who is to say that atheism shall always be wedded to the modernist worldview? Why can't we expect a mystical atheism, a postmodern Scholasticism?

Future iterations of these beliefs will, after all, be present within wholly new (and old, this is no contradiction in philosophy) systems of thought, with unquestioned suppositions and the establishment of another tradition. What makes us so sure that our beliefs are timeless and inherent only to our particular worldviews?

A Limit to Error

Monday, March 4, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/03/04/a-limit-to-error/>

Thought is possible. This might seem to be a trivial statement, but the process of integrating this fact into a system of understanding produces a number of what I believe to be important considerations for metaphysics.

For, thought is not merely possible, but is intrinsically possible according to the necessary structure of reality. We must account for it not simply as something that merely happened by coincidence, but is something that the world makes possible. Mind is not an alien, an intruder, on the continuity of the world, but is at home as much as, if not even more, than matter and life. This is why we should be suspicious of metaphysical paradigms which seem to imply the "spookiness" of thought, when our thought is, if anything, the most immediate and intimately understood part of the world. The external world is weird, when it comes down to it, and [it is attempts to internalize the external](#) (e.g. [logical positivism](#), [radical empiricism](#), [ordinary language philosophy](#)) which we ought to be suspicious of, for they make the very one who peers out on the world a stranger.

I think this implies a limit to error in our reason. By this I mean in the global sense, in terms of the limits intrinsic to our thought. I don't dispute that individual error is virtually boundless.

Consider, for instance, how skepticism about our ability to reason is ever a nuisance for thoroughly empirical epistemological systems. They do not want to posit merely that the details of our knowledge come from the senses, but that the structure of our reasoning does as well. If the structure of our reasoning comes from the senses, then we shall be blind to inherent errors of such induction, especially as such induction is particular and relative to time and place. ([But how does one even detect the problem? I would ask.](#) But let's continue on.) But our senses are likewise something intrinsic to the world! How could the world manage to supply us with false

reason? What generates the false reason, what makes it possible that the world should be presented to us in a fundamentally obscured manner?

As such there must be a limit to error. Our reason cannot be entirely in the dark. And if there is even an iota of light in our reason, then it follows we must be able to root out all the mistakes and bring to light even the darkest attics of our thought.

The Problem with Fiat Money According to Economics 101

Wednesday, March 6, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/03/06/the-problem-with-fiat-money-according-to-economics-101/>

Allow me to explain to you very simply the problem with fiat money. What is fiat money? It is money issued without backing, e.g. the US Dollar. Anyone with an economics 101 background should be able to perceive the line of reasoning employed here, but I intend this to be an argument accessible by the average person off the street.

First, the basic economic propositions of supply and demand in relation to price. A higher price entails higher supply. When you see that you will be paid more for something, you are more likely to give over that something, be it your labor, your goods, etc. A higher price also entails lower demand. When you see that you have to give over more for something, you are less likely to buy something, whether that is someone else's labor, someone else's products, etc. The price system is the coordination of supply and demand at a rate that both sides in a market find equitable, i.e. suppliers are willing to provide as much at some price that consumers demand.

Allowed to work themselves out, the price comes into equilibrium, where as much as is produced is demanded. If the price were higher, then more would be supplied than is demanded; if the price were lower, then more would be demanded than is supplied. That price established in equilibrium, i.e. at that rate where as much is supplied as is demanded (you have neither too much nor too little), is called the *market rate*.

Second, we must understand the problem with price fixing. *Price fixing* is anytime the government establishes a minimum or maximum price for some good. A minimum price we call a price floor, an example of which is the minimum wage. The minimum wage is price fixing in that it makes it illegal for employers to pay less than some established rate. A maximum price we call a price ceiling, an example of which is rent control. Rent control is price fixing in that it makes it illegal for landlords to sell higher than some established rate.

What is the problem with either sides of price fixing?

If we fix the price below the market rate, then demand will increase and supply will fall. There will be less offered than is demanded. What then occurs is a shortage, i.e. not enough is offered to fulfill demand. This is wasteful because it follows that people must consume something else that is inferior to the product they would've otherwise consumed to fulfill some want (i.e. if there's rent control in the city, you rent further out of the city, which means you need to make a further commute than you would've liked).

If we fix the price above the market rate, then demand will fall and supply will increase. There will be more offered than is demanded. What then occurs is a surplus, i.e. more is offered than necessary to fulfill demand. This is wasteful because people consume less than they would've liked of that given good, and the resources used to produce that surplus cannot be used to make other goods that people desire.

Either way, price fixing leads to inefficiency and waste, and society is poorer as a result.

Now, how does this apply to fiat money? The problem comes when we consider *interest*. Interest is the additional money you pay later to have money now. If interest is higher, you're less likely to borrow money; if interest is lower, you're more likely to borrow money. On the supply side, if interest is higher, you're more likely to lend money; if interest is lower, you're less likely to lend money. In other words, interest is the price of borrowing and lending money.

Fiat money is introduced to the market by the government. Since it is printed virtually without cost (compared to the cost of bringing commodity money, e.g. gold-backed) by only one supplier, it isn't subject to the price system. The central bank (i.e. the printer of fiat money) has no input from the market to know what the rate of interest should be, so it cannot help but fix the price of interest. Even if we suppose the central bank were trying to fix the price near the market rate (and this is a supposition which isn't supported by historical evidence), it has no input to know what that should be.

Ergo, a fiat money system necessarily entails price fixing, which leads to shortages or surpluses in borrowing. The interest rate forms an integral component of finance, and finance is a huge sector of first world economies because it is how we finance the development and purchasing of houses, cars, education, and businesses. Since price fixing entails waste, we can only suppose fiat money leads to massive waste in our economy.

Comment on March 9, 2013:

Yes, the value of money fluctuates with supply and demand. If you were dying of thirst in a desert, \$10,000 would have less value to you in that instance than it would in ordinary circumstances. Value is subjective, and it cannot be controlled. The attempt by the government to control the value of money in a society so that it is "free from fluctuation," i.e. doesn't inflate/deflate more than they want, is an impossible problem to solve since it requires knowing the future, and the attempt to "stabilize" the value of money actually works to destabilize economic calculations being made elsewhere in the economy. Of course the gov't isn't going to acknowledge that it does so (and you couldn't show exactly how it does so, since we're talking about things which specifically don't happen that otherwise would've), but being the gov't means you don't have to make that acknowledgment.

The value of money is in that it helps facilitate trade and exchange. The higher the benefits of trade, the higher the value of money. This is how it has its value-as-money.

If a commodity standard were to become abruptly over-supplied, then that media would lose its value as money and society would pick something else. This happens, and while the restructuring is costly, being able to restructure is a benefit preferable to not being able to restructure (or would you rather that Zimbabweans don't use USD?).

In a free market, money and near-money substitutes (e.g. fiduciary media, i.e. bank bills) would proliferate. Banks would compete with each other to offer the most secure and widely-usable currencies, like bills stating rights to a given weight of the commodity, such as gold or silver. In fact, this is essentially how banking got its start, though of course there have been transformations due to progress in the market and government interventions (and I'd note that our banking system is virtually an arm of the government as it is).

If wage slavery is the best option that someone has, and you would take that option away, then I worry what worse situation you're leaving them with. Remember, taking away what you consider for yourself a bad option doesn't mean you're leaving them with a better option.

Granting Meaning

Saturday, March 9, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/03/09/granting-meaning/>

Perhaps it is an attribute of my tendency to autism, but I believe people are too quick to grant the meaning of other people's words. Someone says, off-handedly, "God does not exist." Without going into theology, that is a statement which seems worthy of asking "What does that even mean?" If there is a meaning, then it must be able to be explained non-tautologically. That is, someone could not just say they mean by "God does not exist" that "The state of affairs are such that the being known as God fails to exist." If I ask what you mean by A and you just tell me A or even $\neg A$, you haven't yet told me what you mean by A. In fact, this is a dangerous problem in philosophy, such that when you get down to the nitty-gritty of what a philosopher means by their argument, they are only able to tell you some tautologous proposition, which doesn't get you to the meaning.

It seems that the question of how we're able to know that propositions have meaning has been overlooked ever since logical positivism fell out of favor. I love A.J. Ayer and Wittgenstein for asking those very deep questions; we say things, but how do we know what they mean? So logical positivism was a dead-end, but that doesn't mean it was asking the wrong questions. Now it seems that if you ask "How are we to know that proposition means anything" people take you to be a logical positivist and thus aptly ignored. This is throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

For that, though, I can appreciate the sort of dilemma we face when we allow ourselves to question what we mean by words and ideas. Take knowledge. How do we know of what knowledge is? Do we know it by some paradigm case à la "I know x," and we can analyze that sort of act to see what it is in this case that constitutes knowledge, or do we know the idea of knowledge in order to know that we can even truthfully say that "I know x?" (The late) Wittgenstein's reply is just to point to how we use the words, and that settles it. "Would my language-community let me get away with my saying that my knowing is the case?" For that, though, Wittgenstein seems to wish that philosophers just didn't exist, since after all they're the very people who would (should) be reluctant to grant my statement of knowing. Of course there are not just the philosophers who ask what a word really means, but there are also the poets and masters of prose who push and redefine the meaning of words. Would Wittgenstein do

away with them and leave us only the amateurs of language? Why is my worry about how to build a mousetrap apt and meaningful but my worry about how to explain language isn't?

War, Externalities, and Anarchism

Saturday, March 9, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/03/09/war-externalities-and-anarchism/>

Peace is usually preferred to war. Or, so I am under the impression, as nearly everyone, elitist or plebeian, tells me this is their preference. So let's run with that. If peace is preferable, shouldn't we then be in favor of socioeconomic arrangements that dampen the tendency towards war and military intervention? I will argue that a [well-established](#) anarchy is, all other things held equal, more peaceable than well-established statism.

First, let me explain this claim. I mean that, considered as a variable related to the tendency of war to occur, the strength of statism increases the likelihood, scope, and duration of war. There are other variables which affect this, and so one might agree with my analysis but disagree about the preferability of anarchism, but it would have to be for other reasons. Likewise, I'm making an argument to the effect that war is less likely in anarchism. War could very well take place; in fact, as I will argue, states come into being due to war, and if there was a pre-state society out of which a state arose, then it must've arisen out of anarchy. To say that a preference for peace entails a preference for an anarchistic socioeconomic arrangement is much like saying that a preference for safety entails a preference for using your seat belt. Obviously you can still die while wearing a seat belt, it's just less likely, all other things held equal.

That statism increases the likelihood, scope, and duration of war as opposed to anarchism is based on a simple to understand economic truth. If the price of something is able to be externalized, that good will be in higher demand. For instance, if someone is buying me beer, I will spend more (of the other person's money) on beer. Clearly, I'm not likely to forgo the opportunity for a free beer, so I may end up drinking a beer if I'd previously considered it more than I'd like to spend myself. As such, when someone offers to buy me a beer where before I wouldn't have, we now see the consumption of a beer that otherwise wouldn't have been consumed.

It does not even require that the totality of the cost of consuming something has to fall on me. If there is a particular good deal for beer on offer, I may end up consuming more beer. If before I would've only consumed 2 pints of beer, the offer of a free third pint for buying 2, then I will go on to consume a third pint.

These are instances which are explained by the appeal to law of demand. As price rises, demand falls, and vice versa. If the price falls *for me*, then *my demand* increases.

Sure, the increase of my demand does not entail actual consumption. I might just value other things. But it remains the case that my demand increases.

Now, if we suppose that the price of the consumption of a particular product is, for the individual so-consuming of that good, to be let to fall on others, then we must suppose that it leads to the increased consumption of that product. We can summarize this as saying "Where the cost of a product is externalizable (can be put on others), then that product is consumed more than otherwise."

The state by nature puts the cost of its activities on the society it adjudicates. These are called taxes. It faces less of a restraint in increasing its consumption (whatever its purposes or ends) because it can always just tax society more. As such, this must lead it to consume more than if it were faced with the problem of putting forth its own resources. (There is another factor I'd like to bring up: that of monopolization. So if you're thinking "Okay, so this just means that there is more of what I really like, e.g. public education" then I'll point out the problems that accompany monopolization.)

What is something that the state engages in? War. Since the cost of war (material wealth, human lives, breakdown of society, etc) isn't a burden on the state so much as on the society, the state is more likely to engage in war than would an anarchist society. Its risk/cost is much less; yes, the state may risk being conquered, the politicians might become unpopular, but these costs are clearly less than actually being on the front lines or seeing one's own income diminish as it is taxed more heavily to support the war effort. This is how I conclude that, as one variable amongst others, statism is positively correlated with war; its likelihood of occurrence, [its scope](#), and its duration.

Modes of Arguing for Anarchism

Monday, March 11, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/03/11/modes-of-arguing-for-anarchism/>

What I mean by "modes of arguing" is simply forms of responses to objections made against anarchism. This is an observational kind of piece, rather than any sort of strict argument per se, though describing these different modes should, I believe, help the discussion move forward in that it presents typical sorts of rhetorical moves that I and other anarchists are likely to make.

1. Tu quoque

The "tu quoque," or "you as well" response is supposedly a kind of fallacy, though I don't think in this context it is. The dialogue looks like this:

"We need a state to prevent x problem occurring."

"The state is exactly the occurrence of that problem."

The response, in other words, is meant to point out to the hypothetical statist that his reason to have a state is actually a reason not to have a state. An example of this sort of mode might be over the concern that organizations need "oversight," esp. of the legal sort. However, if

organizations require oversight, and government is meant to solve this problem, then the problem is simply exacerbated, because you are putting into place an organization that by definition cannot be overseen. Who watches the watchers? No one. *Exactly*. If government is legitimate without oversight, then so are other organizations.

This sort of response can be given to other reasons for a government; if the argument requires the government to solve some sort of social problem, and the government is essentially engaged in exactly that problem, then the argument undermines itself, being served with a *tu quoque* response.

2. Superfluity

The dialogue that shall be served with a superfluity response comes in this form:

"We need a state to provide x."

"x can be provided without the state.*"

*It may also be added that it will be better provided without the state.

The response is meant to undermine by showing to the hypothetical statist that the reason the state has for existing isn't really there. An example of this mode may be the argument that you need a state in order to provide occupational licensing. If there isn't a government, then how will the consumer know that his doctor is actually qualified? In reality, as there is a demand for certification/review of our doctors, then that will be provided by the market through private organizations. This makes the state's monopoly on occupational licensing *superfluous*, as it can be provided without the state (and most likely in a superior fashion).

3. Let the good be

"From anarchy a state will arise anyhow."

"That may be so, but why don't we let the good be."

This sort of fatalist objection to anarchism is, as it occurs to me, the weakest and most misguided. Bad things happen, even on a massive scale, but this doesn't provide a reason to make it happen. It may be inevitable that theft will always take place, but that isn't a reason to engage in theft; if anything, it is a reason to guard against theft. If the state is an evil, then we ought to guard against it; if the state isn't an evil, then it needn't be guarded against. Either way, the hypothetical statist making this sort of objection must make another argument to establish the legitimacy of the state, because inevitability doesn't bring legitimacy.

4. Statism is a greater cost

This is, I think, perhaps the only area where a statist has any sound footing, and the anarchist's response, while I find it sound, can be reserved from agreement. This mode is as such:

"If there is no state, then xyz costs to society will take place."

"The costs to society you are worried about are greater under the state."

The response by the anarchist cannot be of the form that such a cost simply won't take place. Granted, the statist could be mistaken (in which case one of the previous three modes will suffice as a response), but it is indubitable that anarchism faces different kinds of costs than

does statism. Every benefit has some cost. The anarchist should face up the costs in this way; they should admit of some cost, though they do not need to agree to its scope or extent, and they should point out what costs take place under statism. My [Children and Anarchism](#) series is meant to account for these sorts of problems, with my conclusion meant to be that while there are some identifiable social costs to anarchism, they are lesser than under statism. A well-formed response should leave the hypothetical statist with a greater burden than they expected in identifying the costs of anarchism while also forcing them to defuse the costs associated with statism.

This is hardly an exhaustive compendium of modes of argument for anarchism, but I reckon these are the most likely to be used. Any statist should, when forming an objection to anarchism, keep these in mind so that the likely response can be accounted for.

Economics and Autism

Tuesday, March 19, 2013

<https://web.archive.org/web/20140711170644/http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/03/19/economics-and-autism/>

Economists tend to have what I would describe as a very autistic perception of the world; an over-emphasis on what can be measured using quantifiable variables and the complete ignoring of everything else. The debates between economists become not “What system improves welfare?” but “What policy will most increase this variable?” The disconnect lies in that what can’t be measured is at least as important, if not more, than the measurable variables, and the means of increasing the measured variables must have some effect on these non-quantifiable qualities, but this is routinely ignored. Even if this effect is perceived from a technically economics perspective, due to the attachment to models, since it can’t be modeled, it is assumed to not even exist. An economist is just as likely to take into consideration these other issues as they are to just gouge out their eyes and insist that, since they can’t see it, it must be inconsequential.

A debate that happened in my Monetary Theory class went as follows: Can the government increase GDP by pro-active fiscal policies? It was assumed that, if the government could increase GDP by these policies, it should. No economist whose views were brought up was of the opinion that the government could increase GDP by just these means, but that the form of growth wasn’t preferable to the kind of growth which would otherwise take place. Meaning what? I think that yes, of course the government can increase GDP. GDP is *one* quantifiable measure of the economy. It is generally taken to be correlated to social welfare, such that higher GDP means higher social welfare.

But holding this to be the case necessarily is absurd. If the government confiscated virtually all wealth beyond what is needed for mean sustenance and used it all to build guns, tanks, battleships, and fighter jets, I would warrant that GDP would shoot up faster than it ever would as savings and idle wealth is turned into this new productive capacity. However, as should be obvious, this isn’t preferable to a GDP that grows only a little bit and people get to go on with

their lives as is. But this brings up the question no economist is asking: Is the correlation between GDP and social welfare severed by pro-active fiscal policies?

Anyone who has ever had to model budget constraints and indifference curves (these economists, *ahem*) can tell you easily. A fiscal policy must be supported by taxation, which is the forcible appropriation of others' money. And if it needs to be forcibly taken from you in order to be provided to you, it's probably not something you wanted. If you get more of what you want from your money, your welfare increases; if more people get more of what they want from their money, social welfare increases. What I will choose to buy with my \$100 will bring me more welfare than what the government will do with that \$100 if they confiscated it. A thousandth share in a Hellfire missile, I reckon, increases my welfare not at all; but those groceries I would've otherwise bought would have increased my welfare vastly. Yet the spending on Hellfire missiles and the spending on groceries are accounted equally by GDP. Huh. It's like a parlor trick.

There is no way for the government to spend society's money in a way that will produce the same kind of society that society would've, by spending its own money, produced for itself. The way this money is spent is, furthermore, structural. We must not compare the society made by government spending and the society made by society spending in terms only of final goods, e.g. Hellfire missiles compared to groceries. You must look at the sorts of economic opportunities that arise in the State-Society that wouldn't otherwise exist. People's jobs and livelihoods are caught up in where the money's coming from, and if that money is coming from the government, then their lives are caught up in the aims and ends of the government. Unless you're so foolish to believe that the people in government are angels who do it out of the goodness of their hearts (not because they enjoy exercising undue and violent power over others), then you must perceive the moral ambiguities that occur when your livelihood and the care you provide for your family is tied to the fate of an organization that owes its existence to an unparalleled willingness to expropriate wealth by violence. It makes it harder to be an anarchist, a libertarian, or a conservative.

But economics is, after all, a "value-free science," [except when it isn't](#). As such economics becomes just a sort of intellectual game of Hide the Costs, and ignoring whatever can't be modeled is a favorite maneuver of economists everywhere.

Protestantism and the State

Wednesday, March 20, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/03/20/protestantism-and-the-state/>

Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, the scholarly arch-conservative who is certainly one of my favorite thinkers (he's on the far right in the banner above), forwards the thesis in his text *Liberty or Equality* that the Reformation and Protestantism generally presages the rise of the modern totalitarian state. There would not seem to be any general persuasion towards statism inherent to Protestantism, but the argument KL supplies is in reference to the penchant for Protestants to regard man as a wholly wretched creature that one does no wrong to abuse from a position of authority and the ecclesiological positivism that follows the abandonment of the body of Rome. I

find his reasoning worth exploring, not to mention I haven't beaten up on Protestantism in a long time, so let's go ahead with this.

Before I go on, this reminds of a point I haven't made her before. As an anarchist and a Catholic Thomist, people often bring up Thomas' support of monarchical governments as though it were something I find difficult to reconcile. To this I can reply in several ways. First, it would be anachronistic to call Thomas a statist in the modern sense. Statism, inasmuch as it implies a Hobbesian absolutism and authoritarian closure (i.e. someone ultimately with absolute power whose will must be obeyed *because*), was a foreign concept to Medieval thinkers, and it wouldn't begin to be developed until Machiavelli, Luther, and Hobbes. The sorts of government Thomas had in mind were, like other thinkers of his age, the pitifully weak (by modern standards) monarchies which were largely subject to the Church practically and theoretically. (Remember that the formal emperors of [the Holy Roman Empire were crowned by the Pope](#) for a period of 700 years, lasting throughout the entire Middle Ages. Even Napoleon was supposed to be crowned by the Pope, but... more on that later.) Second, Thomas hated democracies, calling them evil. I won't claim to know what sort of political view Thomas would hold in the present, but I warrant there's a better chance of him holding views similar to my own than most initially warrant.

The Medieval concept of the state relied heavily on the Aristotelian account, which maintained that there were natural places for people to take in society. Some people were meant to be merchants, peasants, clergy, and rulers. Society as an organic being was simply incomplete without some sort of formal authoritarian closure. While the concept of a "limited state" would not be developed until later (after the concept of the totalitarian state was developed), the Medieval thinkers did not hold the idea of a state that held total top-down power; rather, power was much more fluid, and flowed through the society, Church, and state without which none of the pieces would be complete. Removing one of these pieces would be like having an incomplete body, and even if it would not die, it would be seriously crippled and would not reach its end. As such, the state could not by right do anything to remove or incapacitate the functions that society and the Church offered of themselves. While it may be called land-slavery or wage-slavery in the present, "taxes" were of a much more voluntary form than the present, with peasants paying rent to their lords, who provided protection and law in return. I'm not saying it was peachy, but it's worth pointing out that in the early Middle Ages you were the least likely to die from war or crime than at any other point in time. [I reckon it's no coincidence](#) that the "states" were more like loose communal associations, of which there were hundreds or thousands, depending on your definition.

The Medieval understanding was also, by extension, essentially the Catholic understanding. With the rejection of Catholic orthodoxy in favor of "I just feel like I'm right" methods preferred by individuals like Luther, it's no surprise that this account of society and the state that relied on an ecclesiological element was trashed. But then if all you have essentially is society and the state (for which "the church" is just part of society, rather than something truly external), there can be no circular flow of power; it flows from one to the other. If the Church has no right place to exercise in the world, that leaves only the State to take its place. It can be no surprise that there remains no principled reason to forbid the State from taking over the rightful functions of Church and Society: the State-Society is bred.

It helps, of course, that man is under the generally Protestant account a thoroughly wretched creature who holds no rights to be free from the tyranny of the State. There is nothing that

forbids the State from possessing absolute sovereignty, especially as we must consider that the social creatures require someone to beat sense into them. As KL quotes of Luther, "We are now in such an amazing age that a prince can merit Heaven more easily by shedding blood than others by mere praying." After all, "the secular kingdom is nothing but the servant of God's ire toward the wicked," which should "not be merciful, but severe, earnest and wrathful in its office and function."

Someone will object that this proves nothing, that Luther is not the source of Protestant beliefs, which is the Bible. Granted, but the historical situation and intellectual context of Protestantism cannot be so easily discounted. Was Hegel (Protestant and statist) a mere accident? Is not democracy more amenable to the latitudinarianism of Protestantism than Catholicism? Is it any surprise that presently and historically, the royalist factions have been predominantly Catholic? What should explain this neat divide that occurs in this way practically every time except that there is some difference between Catholicism and Protestantism over the role of the state in society?

The argument is not so tight as theory should prefer, but as a practical, historical argument, the evidence certainly points towards Protestantism fomenting the rise of the State and providing it philosophical ammunition to do what it does. In the words of my friend, "Taxes are needed because people don't voluntarily give what is needed to help others." I reckon this is a prototypical Protestant attitude, as though the money taken from others by violence isn't, for better or worse, their own to dispose of. As they are wretched creatures, they are done no disservice by the State for their possessions to be used for purposes as the State sees fit.

Insofar as I am concerned, this provides two things. First, inasmuch as Protestantism forebodes the State, this provides a *reductio ad absurdum* of Protestantism and the Reformation. Second, it casts further light on the Protestant-modernist attitude that intellectual history began in the 16th century, such that modernism in its forms can be practically equated with Protestantism, including, but not limited to, liberalism, totalitarianism, and, yes, even atheism.*

Oh yes, I know my Protestant friends will find this historical accounting disreputable, but have at it.

*That Protestants and atheists are in spirit the same has not only to do with the essential latitudinarianism of Protestantism (and I'm not even pointing to [Christian atheism](#)), but has to do with an explanation regarding the tendency of atheists towards diverse forms of socialism, which I consider to be only a logical consequence of the Protestant diminution of the Church. More on this soon.

Law in Anarchy

Wednesday, March 20, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/03/20/law-in-anarchy/>

I've promised for a while to cover this topic, but only now do I think I adequately write about it. What I want to explain is the reason for why, in anarchy, there will form a comprehensive and generally agreeable legal system which includes courts, judicial process, and

insurance/protection agencies. This is mostly speculation, though it is grounded in economic and game-theoretic reasoning. On one hand, it is unfair to maintain that law cannot occur in anarchy because it has never been allowed to occur, so while my speculations here may not detail thoroughly or even completely accurately the form that a legal system will take in an anarchic society, that I must speculate does not count as a principled objection. On the other hand, the forms of dispute resolution and third-party enforcement of law that people have in mind does have some real world non-state instances, and these can be held up as examples of the possibility of non-state forms of legal product considered generally fair and efficient.

Suppose you live in anarchy. You have no intent of violating anyone else's rights, but that does not mean no one else will decide to expropriate your property or harm you bodily. As a means of deferment against this, in order to dissuade potential criminals from harming you, you take out a protection and insurance policy with a large firm that specializes in law enforcement. What you purchase is a comprehensive form of protection that contractually obliges the firm to insure against damages against your person and property. You choose this firm over others for a variety of reasons which aren't very important here.

The firm is intent on making a profit. As such, it seeks to avoid costs while also providing a service of such quality that persuades other customers to choose them over other firms in the same industry. Among the means of avoiding costs available to it, it is unlikely to renege on its contractual obligations, for this will lose it customers to other firms and it will fail to be profitable any longer. It will seek, as far as is efficient, to dissuade crime from occurring by providing proactive protection and, inasmuch as it is more efficient to insure for damages, to seek compensation from the criminals who have caused such damages. This is why I believe it likely that imprisonment of criminals is likely to include forced labor, for certainly it is an insult to make the victim pay for the justice done to a criminal in addition to not making the criminal compensate the victim for the wrong done them. In addition, this provides a means of deferring costs, as criminals become not merely a liability but a possible means of profit, as their labor becomes a valuable commodity which can be sold by the firm.

But if this is a means of profit for the firm, why doesn't the firm choose to simply imprison all the people it can, obviating the need to provide the service of law? Slavery is, after all, lucrative, entailing as it does the little cost of sustenance and the threat of violence against the de facto slave.

The firm is precluded from pursuing this strategy because whoever else it shall imprison shall have their own protection agencies. No one would purchase a protection plan from a firm if they wouldn't be likewise protected from the threat of unjust imprisonment and forced labor. Such would thus be a basic necessity of insurance. One purchases insurance against undue damages.

If protection agencies are intent on providing the service of keeping their own customers from being imprisoned by other agencies, why wouldn't the system immediately break down into mutual war between the agencies? War is costly, and is more costly than seeking a form of mutual dispute resolution. As such, it is advantageous to the protection agencies to have a legal system in place that details under what conditions their customers shall be handed over for imprisonment as a means of compensation to victims. In other words, you can buy protection from the damages of crime, but you can't buy protection from the enforcement of the law (or at least, it should be prohibitively expensive*). The firms would produce a system of checks and

balances that is thought by their customers to be fairest; this would be a de facto legal system, as it would include the process of prosecution and sentencing by a court, likely administered by a separate judicial business with a good reputation for fairness in sentencing. The firms would make a contract regarding processing of criminals convicted by this legal system, so that criminals are not imprisoned for a time beyond what is considered fair, nor less than that. (Remember that the firms seek to imprison and/or fine criminals in order to extract from the criminal value which can be used to compensate the victim his damages.)

This is, I reckon, a rough outline of how law would be provided in an anarchic society which grounds its feasibility.

*I won't deny the likelihood of organizations that specialize in the service of law enforcement avoidance for their customers, but I'd imagine that the legitimate firms would find it in their interest to root out these organizations as efficiently as possible, since they would, in the case of successful punishment avoidance, impose a cost on the firm since they are still on the hook for compensating the victim. This isn't even a problem unique to anarchy, since organizations specializing in punishment avoidance already exist within our statist society, which are usually called 'organized crime.' The status of illegitimacy by these organizations would likely remain in an anarchic society.

Now, I know there will be some what-if scenarios presented. I cannot imagine any presently that could undermine the feasibility of anarchic legal systems, but I know that most will take the form of "But the poor...!?!!" so allow me to answer those.

First, what of those who choose not to buy insurance? Where is justice for them? To that, I can only say, sucks.

But what about children of families who choose not to buy legal protection? This may be a real problem. I will deal with it at length in my [Children and Anarchism](#) series in the next post (for which this post provides a foundation).

What of the poor? I think this is two different problems, which I'll handle separately.

The poor in poor communities (e.g. third world conditions) may not have a lot of legal recourse available to them. They may not be able to purchase an extensive or comprehensive protection plan. However, I note that this is not really a problem with anarchic law per se, but a wealth problem. Very simply, better law enforcement is a luxury that comes with prosperity. Who do you think is afforded better law enforcement, the average American or the average Chinese? Other social issues aside, I reckon the American gets better legal services largely because he is wealthier; he can afford a lawyer, his taxes pay for better policing and law enforcement (theoretically), so on and so forth. If you're worried about access to legal services due to poor socioeconomic conditions, you should worry about how wealth is created, which is a separate problem.

The second problem concerning the poor might be considered more general. What of those individuals and families who, due to present circumstance (e.g. being young) are unable to afford protection? I admit the possibility such a problem, but I reckon it exaggerated. On one hand, the poor have less to lose; this means they are less likely to be stolen from and also that their protection shouldn't cost as much. Do you think a firm is going to make someone with only \$10,000 in assets pay as much as the millionaire for insurance? On the other hand, the poor are

most likely to be harmed by other poor. For better or worse, the poor will be easier to prosecute. Since firms will seek whatever fair means there are to avoiding costs, and forced labor is a valuable possibility, this will improve the affordability of protection to the poor. In fact, it might just be possible that the cost of insurance hovers near zero, as the forced labor of a criminal might provide a value that outweighs the costs of prosecuting the criminal and compensating the victim.

What if the criminal is very wealthy, and the victim very poor? I admit it is a reality that wealth makes it more likely that the criminal will be able to avoid crime, but again, this is not a problem unique to anarchism. Furthermore, since the assets of the criminal could possibly be exploited for compensation, the criminal stands to lose more than he could gain from the victim in most cases. The possibility of deriving compensation from the assets of the criminal could be so profitable that the cost of protection for the wealthy will be progressive, since surely in the case of being prosecuted they want more to be done to protect their own assets from seizure as a means of compensation (and this would provide a means of subsidizing the cost to the poor, thanks to price discrimination), and this is likely to even further incentivize the wealthy from attempting to criminally exploit the poor.

What if one firm managed to monopolize a territory, so that it became a state? Well, isn't that what you want anyway? Why is that a problem for you? Sure, it's a possibility, but the prior period of anarchism would surely provide great prosperity for society in the meanwhile.

Comment on March 21, 2013:

"Right" as I'm using it here is just the practical concern over what is one's own, i.e. life and property. I don't mean some sort of theoretical ethical commitments, I'm only trying to illustrate the workings of law in anarchy through the broadest strokes.

As to what-ifs concerning severity of threat, I can suppose that there would be different tiers of protection. More protection = higher premium. We do allow people to choose the level of insurance for their health, from basic to extensive. Why would someone who doesn't expect to be caught up in a riot want to spend money insuring against that possibility? I'm sure many people in Minnesota don't have insurance against earthquakes, but I'd guess lots of Japanese do.

Regarding instances of high-risk occupations and/or geographies, I don't see this as a problem. People who accept to live where they do and behave in the way they do are left to shoulder their own costs, rather than being subsidized by those who don't make such poor choices. I think this is actually an interesting issue, and I want to give it a more in-depth analysis in the future, but I think for now you'll just have to accept that I don't see this as a problem.

What constitutes crime is determined by society, and I think it likely to be focused on violations of life, property, and contract. There is nothing special that gives the firms a "right" to make arrests and imprison. If you have the right to hire a gun, you also have the right to fire a gun; the same principle holds for making arrests and imprisonment. There isn't some special bureau in the sky operated by angels where people buy a license to have such authority.

If forced labor is slavery, wouldn't imprisonment per se be slavery, since it constitutes forced non-labor? I don't see why a criminal cannot be forced to compensate for his crime to the best

of his abilities. In fact, I think it'd be preferable. If I had money stolen off of me, I'd like it returned even more than I'd like to see someone put away, but if putting someone away is what it takes to have that money returned (with interest, of course), I'd be fine with that. You, ever the advocate for the poor, certainly couldn't say this is a problem, seeing as you are okay with forcing the wealthy to give over their wealth for literally no wrongdoing.

Would slavery be legal in anarchy? The answer to that is very well maybe. Slavery has been practiced by societies since the beginning of time, and I'd argue that citizenship is a form of slavery. I'd imagine it to be contingent on the kind of culture. Catholic cultures? Not likely. Muslim cultures? Probably.

Collusion is very difficult, practically impossible. All it takes is one person cheating and the price fixing can't be pulled off. Even states can't manage collusion with each other, and they're defined as collusion of aggression against territories. As I admit at the end, sure, the agencies could just become states, but why isn't that what you'd prefer? If they promised to steal from the wealthy to give to the poor, wouldn't you sign up?

Non-customers who, having charges brought against them, might have the opportunity to buy legal support. I'd assume that the majority of society would prefer for the court systems to apprehend the right persons, so even they might be afforded a court hearing, though it might be like going through court without a lawyer.

Yes, some criminals can not ever possibly compensate the victims for their crimes. Not a problem unique to anarchy, though at least there would be the possibility of forced labor for those crimes which might be compensated, unlike the present system.

Being poor does just suck. This is why people prefer to be wealthy rather than poor, but last I checked, you don't think people should aspire to wealth. If being poor sucks, but you don't want people to try and escape poverty, what's left to do?

Comment on March 26, 2013:

Anarchyland may just be a collection of self-segregated communities centered around shared ethnicities and/or values. I'm okay with that. I don't see "diversity" as a good in and of itself. I wouldn't suppose there to be no cosmopolitan centers, but the most vibrant cultural centers have all involved self-segregated communities, e.g. New York City before the late 20th century or pre-war Vienna. The majority of human history has been like this. I don't see what's wrong with it.

Why are we allowed to imprison individuals and make them stick to a daily routine, but we can't force them to work? Rehabilitation may be a nice end, but I imagine the victims are more interested in seeing their losses paid back to them. Fine, call it slavery, but I don't see the problem with forced labor.

Historically, most became slaves by conquest. No states, no conquest. The other route into slavery is usually as a kind of indentured servitude. I reckon the supply of criminals placed into forced labor will decrease the demand for other slaves. As to child prostitution, why not just a good dash of vigilantism? You should avoid subjugating the innocent to get at the criminal. Do

you think many people in society would stop the lynching of a child pimp? Actually, this inspires me to do a post on slavery in anarchy.

Corporations have their own constitutions and charters, and seeing as they're so ideologically necessary to sell people on the state, it'd likely be part of the marketing when they come to take your money by force. Even the Nazis told the conquered they were doing it for their own good, and they received parades. Of course, I can note one fundamental moral difference between corporations and states: corporations aren't taking your money by force. Maybe they would if they could, but I've never known a government to begrudge its own power to do so anyway.

Comment on March 26, 2013:

If you're going to call market exchange exploitation, then what do you call taxation? Are you proposing that, in order to avoid exploitation, we grant a state the absolute right of one-sided exploitation? I'm okay with market "exploitation," but you're okay with coercive exploitation.

"But, because some are more powerful, they are able to abuse others, and in doing so gain more power also. This would function all the worse when the commodity is protection and punishment."

The problem is that some people would have more power than others, and you propose solving this problem by giving someone absolute power? I hope you're going to re-think your objection.

Comment on July 20, 2013:

Some social goods can only be achieved through the existence of large, powerful social institutions. Companies have a role to play in markets. Looking out after each other? That's not a clear prescription for any particular system.

Intelligibility and the World

Thursday, March 21, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/03/21/intelligibility-and-the-world/>

I must confess that I previously was highly skeptical of arguments for God's existence on the basis of the intelligibility of the world, but now I'm founding myself more persuaded towards them. Admittedly my previous skepticism had a lot to do with how they were presented to me by others. For instance, there is the "Minimalist Teleological Argument" that my friend Doug presents [here](#). That argument is, I believe, a complete non-starter. For one, this reference to "chance" as fundamentally opposed to design is attendant to a mechanistic conception of the world that I find utterly inadequate. Further, what is called the "laws of nature" almost seems to take on a reified being, as though they were more than descriptions of the dispositions of actual beings in the world. Sorry Doug, I'm just too much a Thomist.

However, from another view there is a way to see the immanence of thought in the world. It is not an argument by appeal to "chance" and "design," but the fundamental intelligibility of the

world. It is an argument that occurred to me while reading Thomas Nagel's *Mind and Cosmos* (review upcoming).

There is the possibility of mental explanation. By *mental explanation* I mean that explanation is an intrinsically mental process. Explanation is a kind of reasoning about the occurrence of things, such that a thing's being is adequated by reference to some disposition of the world to produce such a state of affairs. It is an activity undertaken by minds. Ergo, there is the possibility of minds, and the possibility of explaining that there can be explanation. To say the world is intelligible is to say that we can explain the possibility of explanation. It is not a matter of explaining some given thing, but of explaining a universal quality, i.e. explanation per se.

What can explanation be explained by? I do not see how explanation can be explained by material processes. What material process forms an explanation for anything? The rock is dropped and it falls to the ground. What did this signify to what mind? Mind is essential to the possibility of the world, prior to any particular state of affairs. Mind is thus not identifiable with any particular material arrangement, because the possibility of such a material arrangement possessing the power to embody mind stands in further need of explanation.

It is a statement about thought which can be reduced to this: Thought cannot be explained by the unthinking. Thought is only explainable in terms of other thought. But since this possibility is prior to any particular (i.e. it is general/universal), the world stands in need of explanation for this thought, which is itself meant to ground the possibility of the world. Intelligibility, an explanation for explainability, is grounded only on some intrinsically thinking being. There must be, in other words, a mind prior to anything particular in the world.

This mind we can only understand to be God.

The Existential Project and Ethical Action, or Why to be Ethical

Thursday, March 21, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/03/21/the-existential-project-and-ethical-action-or-why-to-be-ethical/>

By moral egoism I mean that the reason for ethical action has to do with something the individual has a personal interest in. That person's ego cannot be discounted, but actually forms the basis for ethical action. I believe many people tend to have a knee-jerk reaction against egoism in their ethics, but there is actually a serious problem for moral systems that fail to appeal to something the individual has a personal interest in, i.e. if that system fails to be egoistic. Egoistic does not mean "egotistical." It only means that, for instance, my reason for being ethical is because it provides me access to something I have a reason to want. I will make an argument in favor of moral egoism.

Every individual human being has an "existential project." An existential project is that there is some end which the person seeks after in which they find their satisfaction. It could be called, varyingly, self-actualization, rest, eudaimonia, peace, and so on. I will here call it satisfaction, but I do not mean to stake out any claim regarding what the end of the existential project is. I

have in mind a kind of theosis illustrated by Augustine's claim that "The heart is restless until it rests in [God]," but I'm not making that argument right now.

The existential project is essential and intrinsic to every person. It is not required that it be known or understood by the individual, it is only apparent that every individual possesses a longing for some kind of end not found the trivialities of this world. This longing has been diagnosed by thinkers of diverse belief systems, from the Buddha to Koholeth (writer of Ecclesiastes) to Camus to Aristotle. They each provided different paths to reach satisfaction, but they were all concerned and interested in the same thing fundamentally.

An ethical system must account for this existential project at the core of every human individual. If it fails to do so, then a dilemma is produced. If satisfaction of the existential project is not itself an ethical obligation, then it becomes possible that ethical action and existentially satisfactory action diverge. If they diverge, then it would follow that, in order to be ethical, the individual must give up the pursuit of satisfaction, or in order to gain satisfaction, the individual must give up the ethical. This is intuitively disastrous. Ethics, usually taken to be a paradigmatic human pursuit, without a concern for the existential project fails to be concerned with the essence of human existence. It becomes anti-human.

If ethics is to be human, then ethics must account for the existential project, so that ethical action and the pursuit of satisfaction do not diverge. If they are not allowed to diverge, then the purpose of ethical action must be as a means of providing existential satisfaction. What is ethical, or virtue, becomes those actions which bring one nearer to existential satisfaction, while vice are those actions which prove a hindrance.

This also solves the problem of why to be ethical. If I have this intrinsic existential project, then I cannot help but seek out its satisfaction. The practice of ethics becomes the pursuit of this satisfaction. It does not rely on any external motivation, e.g. Heavenly reward and/or punishment (I actually believe it changes our view of what constitutes these things), but presses on a fundamental dilemma faced by everyone.

Modes of Challenging Anarchism

Friday, March 22, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/03/22/modes-of-challenging-anarchism/>

Akin to my [Modes of Arguing for Anarchism](#), I think the challenges against anarchism can be broadly classified into two kinds. The first is that of Technical Feasibility; anarchism, in that it lacks a central coercive organization, consequently is an incomplete society which wants for certain kinds of services. The second challenge comes from Distributive Justice; without a form of coercive redistribution, an anarchic society is unjust, as it wants for the provision of a more just distribution of goods and services.

Technical Feasibility is a challenge that comes in the form of public goods problems and externalities. A "public good" is the supposition that certain essential social goods like roads, military, and policing will be inadequately provided as there is the temptation of individuals to free ride. The benefit you obtain by purchasing something still comes to me even if I don't

purchase it, so why should I purchase it? Thus it follows that the price is higher for those who do pay, but this means there are even less to pay, and thus ultimately it isn't provided for anyone. Related, there is the worry that certain externalities require comprehensive judicial arrangement in order that, for instance, factories won't just dump their waste upstream, diminishing the value of beachfront property and water downstream.

The anarchist response largely comes down to showing how these goods might actually work in a way that is technically feasible. For instance, tolls are a good response to roads as a public good, as this allows the producers to capture their revenue from users. Externalities could be faced with the same sort of response, and as the solution seems to be legal-contractual, [it depends on the development of anarchist legal theory](#).

The challenge of Distribute Justice depends on a particular conception of anarchism, usually as being a "ruthless capitalist system" where the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. There are two different ways of responding for an anarchist that I know of. The first is to argue that a true capitalism is not unjust. The second is to argue that anarchism is unlikely to be capitalist, and may be communist or syndicalist. Of course I tend towards the first, and have leveraged a number of arguments in favor of capitalism from rights-based and utilitarian lines of reasoning. Either way, the anarchist will have a problem with statist redistribution in that it is coercive, being no more than theft and violence.

Slavery and Anarchy

Tuesday, March 26, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/03/26/slavery-and-anarchy/>

I think slavery is unlikely to occur in anarchy to a wide degree. This might seem surprising, but I believe this is due to people's aptness to identify the protection of rights with the state. I grant it is likely to occur, especially of certain benign forms, but even so it will not be widespread.

Historically, slavery has existed in virtually every society. Only recently has slavery been more or less abolished. As such, for this reason I won't claim certainty that slavery will always remain abolished. It could be brought back in any society, and is not a problem unique to anarchism. So before anything else is said about the matter, I note my skepticism that slavery won't ever become prevalent again, either under statism or anarchism. What I will argue is that the occurrence of slavery is no more likely to take place in anarchism.

Firstly, most have become slaves by conquest. In the ancient world, it was just a matter of course that, when you conquered a people, you would take some of the people as your own slaves. Arguably, antebellum slavery was due to a variant of conquest, as African tribes would repeatedly war with each other and sell off the conquered to Europeans and Americans. But, if you don't have states, you don't have conquest. Without this means of making slaves, you won't have slaves be introduced into society.

Second, there is the slavery which can be more accurately called indentured servitude. This takes place when people sell themselves into slavery, either as a means of buying passage (many came to pre-Revolution America in this way) or for paying off accumulated debts. I do not

see anything intrinsically wrong with indentured servitude, and such a form of slavery is, I believe, likely to be the most prevalent. Even so, I imagine many would do what they can to avoid having to sell themselves into slavery, so it would be rare.

Third, there is the matter of forced labor. As I detailed in my post [Law in Anarchy](#), security firms are likely to make criminals a resource of forced labor. You could call it slavery, though I think it more accurate to just call it what it is, which is the forced labor of criminals. I do not see any inherent problem with forced labor, for if I were a victim of crime I would like my losses to be compensated. The supply of forced labor would serve to mitigate whatever demand for slavery there might be. Granted, the forced labor must be paid for (the security agencies realize the profit of forced labor in this way), so it is likely a greater cost than the labor of a slave, but there is a notable advantage to acquiring forced labor rather than a slave.

One of the costs of a slave is convincing others not to steal away your slaves, and even to bring you back your slaves should they run away. However, many people would have an interest in convincing a slave to work for them for a pittance rather than staying with their owner. One of the forms of payment would include a subscription to a security agency, so that the slave is unlikely to be impressed back into slavery, and this is an opportunity many slaves would find preferable to just staying in slavery. With forced labor, there is a vast organization interested in making sure your criminal “slave” does not run off, for then they should not be able to realize the profit of their work. As such, it would just be economically expedient to buy forced labor than to try and prevent a slave from being stolen away.

What of the hard cases, such as child prostitution? I do not think a state is required to handle them. A good dash of vigilantism would easily solve this problem. Certainly, the vast majority of the population that claims moral outrage wouldn't seek to prosecute those who took punishment into their own hands, and security agencies wouldn't likely find it profitable to try and defend child pimps. In fact, I think the security agencies more likely to sell the service of cracking down on child prostitution, and I know I would voluntarily pay for such a service. We like to imagine that in the case of public goods problems everyone avoids paying for something because they'll get the benefit without the cost, but are you saying you wouldn't feel guilty for not donating to such a cause?

This is why I don't see slavery to pose a problem for anarchism, at least not to any degree greater than is faced by statism.

Comments on March 30, 2013:

How do state police forces manage to do what you think is a special problem for private security forces? Each answer here is the same, sans coercive funding.

You're not really showing why slavery would be especially a problem for anarchy. Slavery is a problem, it exists, yes, but the special point about anarchy here is what?

People and Profits

Thursday, April 4, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/04/04/people-and-profits/>

“People, not profits!” You’ve heard this before. You know I’m going to say it’s mistaken, so let’s get down to why.

The bottom line of business is profit. In fact, profit is the legal purpose of corporations. I could make the point I’ve made before numerous times, that money and profit is essential to facilitating the division of labor that allows us to accumulate wealth like we have in the West. But I want to make a deeper, humanist point about the good of profits.

What I believe is over-emphasized is the way in which profits are not an unalloyed good. Hardly any good is unalloyed. Every good except for the Good, when loved out of order, becomes an evil. Money is good, community is good, solidarity is good, family is good, and so on, but the love of these things in a disordered fashion is an evil. The disordered love of money becomes the vice of greed; the disordered love of sexuality becomes the vice of lust; the disordered love of self becomes the vice of pride; so on and so forth. It would be a mistake to confuse the disordered love of a good with the proper love a thing deserves.

There can be a proper love of profits. A profit is, in the broadest sense, merely a benefit that is found to outweigh the cost of its attaining. When I get off the couch to get a glass of milk from the fridge, such can be considered a profit, since the cost (my spending the time and labor) is outweighed by the benefit (the delicious glass of cold milk). I would not have acted unless I thought the benefit would outweigh the cost. This is true for all actions. Whenever we act, our bottom line is on the profit. What do I get out of it? If the answer is a better world (by our lights) than would have otherwise been the case, we undertake action to accomplish that end. Action has its end in profit. With this sense of profit, you literally cannot expound on the purpose of favoring people without invoking the good of profit. You cannot separate people and profit; to be a person is to seek after profit.

Tightening the sense of profit to its context within the market, that of a business’ monetary profit, the same goes through. It is merely that because we are specifying one particular form of profit in exclusion to others (e.g. the profit of health, pleasure, friendship) can there be a disordered love, if monetary profit is made prior to the other forms of profit such as family. Yet there is a proper place for monetary profit. Monetary profit is instrumental to serving these other forms of profit; if we as a society didn’t have money, we couldn’t have the wealth of time to spend with our families, and if we as individuals didn’t have monetary profit, we couldn’t afford to live. (Before someone objects “But no one should be allowed to die just because they can’t be productive!” let me point out that this isn’t what I’m saying. I’m saying that if no one made a monetary profit, i.e. costs outweighed benefits, the everyone would die because there wouldn’t be anything anyone needed to live.)

Profits are and should be people-oriented. They should not be stricken or vilified as something they’re not. They aren’t everything, but they still have a crucial and important role in society. Do not overlook the virtue just because others make it a vice.

St. Francis of Assisi, Patron Saint of 2013

Thursday, April 4, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/04/04/st-francis-of-assisi-patron-saint-of-2013/>

I selected St. Anselm of Canterbury as patron saint of my blog last year, as I had the intent of exploring ontological arguments, so it only seemed natural to pick him. I have lately taken to analyzing economic, social, and political philosophy, of which one of my aims is to understand and describe a just society. As St. Francis of Assisi had an abiding interest in the poor, it seems fitting to choose him for this theme, in addition to the decision of the new Pope choosing Francis as his regnal name.

Mother Teresa's version of the Prayer of St. Francis:

*Make us worthy Lord to serve our fellow men throughout the world,
who live and die in poverty and hunger.
Give them through our hands, this day, their daily bread
and by our understanding love give peace and joy.
Lord, make me a channel of thy peace.
That where there is hatred I may bring love,
That where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness,
That where there is discord, I may bring harmony,
That where there is error I may bring truth,
That where there is doubt I may bring faith,
That where there is despair I may bring hope,
That where there are shadows I may bring light,
That where there is sadness I may bring joy.
Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted,
To understand than to be understood,
To love than to be loved.
For it is by forgetting self that one finds.
It is by forgiving that one is forgiven,
it is by dying that one awakens to eternal life.
Amen.*

Ideology and Extremism

Saturday, April 13, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/04/13/ideology-and-extremism/>

It would be trite to go on about how extremism is a label overused and applied, though such is the case. I don't want to say here that I shouldn't be called an extremist, for many would apply the term to me as an anarchist, but I want to say that extremism and reasonableness are not at a contrast. A person cannot be unreasonable for following through on reasonable premises; but

in many cases, it is premises that are widely considered “reasonable” which leads to “extreme” positions. These arguments may even be the most interesting, from a sociological and philosophical perspective: after all, it is probably the tension in “common sense knowledge” which leads most to philosophy, and those who remain in philosophy reach countless perplexing paradoxes concerning what they thought they knew which can never be solved. Philosophy will most assuredly disabuse one of their certainty, so while one may never go full blown pommo, he is rarely inclined to move from his chair. Philosophers are rarely activists; activists are rarely philosophers.

Philosophers tend to be the least extreme members of society. I don’t know of any statistics on the matter, but I’d be willing to warrant that philosophers are, even for their tendency towards progressivism (at least in the modern age), the most conservative when it comes to the question of revolution. Not a single philosopher I know countenances the good of revolution, and of those otherwise in favor of revolution within the wings of philosophy, they remain in the marginalized and unesteemed schools of postmodern and minorities theory. And even then, they are the most attached to our present system! Even your humble writer here, an unabashed anarchist, is opposed to revolution.

Revolutionism, progressivism, ideologism, these are facets of extremism. If my intuition is correct, your average man of the street is more an ideologue, a progressivist, a revolutionary, and thus more an extremist, than the very philosophers who forward the theories they base their notions of justice and righteousness on. What does it do to be an extremist, except a willingness to destroy borne of certainty? And all forms of violence, these are just the means of destruction. War, law, tax, slavery, so on and so forth, all the instruments of the state for control and possession of the world are extreme, they are violent, and furthermore they ascend by the seeking for power on the backs of those who are so certain it must occur.

I am not saying that extremism is wrong. This is not an attempt at a reductio of statism, as my wary readers likely suspect. It seems clear that, for extreme depravities and violations, an extreme response is perfectly justified. Self-defense or defense on behalf of a third party is likely one of the most widely shared moral intuitions we have in society, and I certainly have it as well. My point is that the call to arms, to violence, for whatever reason is extreme.

Who else but the philosopher can reckon that, even as they are assaulted by the mob, the mob might very well be right? To be a philosopher is to give up the sense of certainty, including in the moral and political realm. The only path to certainty is ideology. If you want to rouse a people to action, do not engender them to philosophy. It will only sharpen skepticism and likewise dull them to the satisfaction in extremism.

Philosophers are not politicians, and politicians are not philosophers. This must be where Plato went wrong. Even those philosophers who deliver to the world justification for their state do not receive support from their politicians, because the politicians realize that the philosophical support of their rule is superfluous. Their rule is founded on certainty and extremism, not skepticism and ideology.

The Influence of Aesthetics

Saturday, April 13, 2013

There seems a *je ne sais pas* when it comes to understanding the motivations of particular individuals towards the conclusions they are led to. Quine spoke of a preference for “desert landscapes,” by which he means a thoroughgoing reductionism, eliminativism, and high-nihilism when it comes to metaphysical, epistemological, and semiological commitments. He wanted to rid the world of as many concepts as possible, and speak of as little as possible. On the other hand, you have philosophers who tend almost to an excess of things in the world, who have a thing exist for every thing that doesn’t exist ([Meinong](#)) or is merely possible ([David Lewis](#)). These are conclusions led from differing aesthetic commitments, or so at least am I inclined to explain these intellectual idiosyncrasies psychologically.

For instance, we might explain the difference between epistemological internalists and externalists so. Internalism results inexorably in skepticism; externalism is predicated on the notion of getting over skepticism no matter what. Indeed, you ask externalists why to prefer it over internalism, and they will tell you “because it avoids skepticism.” Are there any other virtues? Perhaps, but this (in my experience) is the most oft-repeated. As such, it always comes down to a clash over aesthetics; knowledge of the external world is important! It isn’t that important! I don’t see how this can be resolved by reason, as it stems from different aesthetic commitments. Myself, I am led to internalism and skepticism (of the external world) for the simple matter that I don’t find knowledge about the external world important. [Everything that’s important to know is known as a matter of pure reason and principle.](#)

I have the same sort of feeling when it comes to “making society work.” I am always left with the worry over whether society can work only at the cost of the soul of humanity. Society can only occur with government, or at least so is the dominant sociological expectation. If that’s the case, I’m left to the question of whether it better that man perish by fire if he cannot even manage to live morally if he is to live at all. Live without a soul or die with it. Which are we to do? And I’m alive, aren’t I? Is this why society hates itself?

I am likely an anarchist in part due to my disgust with problems of modern society which I have been forced to confront. This is the age of the state, is it not? Most of the first world is controlled by governments. Totalitarianism is creeping and subtly diffused throughout society. Most cannot shake the feeling that we require a state to “bind us together,” a latent nationalism that I want no part to do with (like I really want to be put together with such a teeming horde and be thought responsible for their actions!), even if those same individuals are supposedly the most pro-family intellectuals I’m supposed to know.

I wonder if this explains the resilience with which people hold on to their beliefs, even if those beliefs are often formed at first with little knowledge or evidence of the relevant matters. Their conclusions are at first reached by an aesthetic influence over the way the world seems like it ought to be, and the evidence called upon later is only a rationalization. Are we as philosophers merely much more practiced at rationalization? Do we ever really transcend to become beings of thought and reason? Is this concern itself merely an aesthetic commitment, and I’m putting myself through grief over it without due justice, a kind of philosophical sickness a la Wittgenstein?

Argument, Ethics, and Ethical Nihilism

Saturday, April 13, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/04/13/argument-ethics-and-ethical-nihilism/>

Any statement that includes a prescription/proscription about how one *ought* to live their life or interact with the world due to some intrinsic obligation is ethical. This is no matter what sort of action one is dictating. Now, some oughts are not ethical per se, such as [how one ought to pour and serve a Guinness](#), but in this case that is because they lack any intrinsic obligation. One can point to extrinsic obligations, but those are, I note, only concerned with means meant to obtain ends that one is free to choose or not choose which do not lead to some violation of an intrinsic obligation. Whenever it is a matter of intrinsic obligation, then we are concerned with the ethical, rather than the merely aesthetic.

If that is the subject matter of ethics, then it becomes impossible to argue for ethical nihilism in a rationally consistent manner. After all, what could the so-called ethical nihilist suppose, that one ought to accept their argument as rationally compelling stemming from some intrinsic obligation? That is, are they going to argue that I am ethically obligated to accept their argument? Once we presume ethical nihilism, I am under no ethical obligation to accept certain forms of arguments over others. I could just as well say "Winston Churchill is a duck, an elephant is hiding under my desk, therefore ethics is real." Sure, it's a materially poor argument, but why am I under an obligation to accept only good arguments?

So arguing for ethical nihilism is self-defeating. The very notion of argument presumes a kind of ethical obligation to accept arguments that one is able to countenance the rational soundness of.

But why, we might ask? Well, we can only say that it is for the good of the person to do so. It engenders [a kind of egoism](#), even a kind of natural law theory. Being a rational being entails that one ought to accept only rational arguments, for the good of that very rational being.

I grant this is only a sketch for now, but I think there is good material for further cultivation. This is a notion already latent in some other takes at meta-ethics I've made, [so I'll let myself off here with what I've already said on the matter](#).

Reductionism and Infinite Descent

Monday, April 15, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/04/15/reductionism-and-infinite-descent/>

Reductionism is the attempt at ontological explanation from parts to wholes; that is, wholes are composites of parts unless those wholes are indivisible, in which case they are elementary, or simple, i.e. composed of no other parts but themselves. In order for such to count as explanation, however, there must be simple particles that of themselves suffice to explain every higher level. Otherwise, the project of reductionism, explanation of wholes by their parts, is at

least inadequate, and some other mode of explanation must be sought after that will prove adequate, either by the explanation of parts by their wholes or a holistic mode of explanation. I want to look at one objection to reductionism, that of infinite descent.

Infinite descent, the actuality or possibility of endless divisibility of particles at any level, poses a problem to reductionism because one would always be attempting to explain wholes by their parts, and those parts by their parts, so on and so forth ad infinitum, which would leave any whole unexplained, since further explanation is always required but only forthcoming. However, we do not seem capable of ruling infinite descent out metaphysically, leaving us with at least the actual possibility of infinite descent, which rules out reductionism as a complete form of metaphysical explanation in the world.

The mere possibility of infinite descent is sufficient to refute reductionism. It could be the case in the world that some lowest level is actually manifested at a given point in time. But so long as whatever lowest level is manifested is potentially divisible, then we have the actual possibility of infinite descent.

What points to infinite descent as a reality of our world?

First, there is the nature of physical explanation. Whenever in our physical experiment we observe some yet-to-be explained motion in a particle, our tendency is to postulate an as-yet unobserved particle that by its nature explains that newly observed motion. This leads to ever finer substrata of particles, as the motion of the atom becomes explained by electrons and protons, protons are explained by quarks, mass is explained by the Higgs boson, yet the Higgs boson has mass and its own motion, etc etc. It may be that the nature of our physical explanation in this case, i.e. multiplying of particle entities, is due to the very possibility of infinite descent.

Second, there is no way to observe the reality of a fundamental level. For any given empirical horizon, that something cannot be observed beyond does not prove that there is nothing beyond to observe. For instance, I cannot infer from the observation of a closed door that there is nothing beyond that door; I might even open the door, and discover a hallway with another closed door at its end; if I am seeing something, I am observing something that obscures what is beyond itself. This is the nature of observation. This might explain the tendency of endless multiplication of particle entities in our physics explanations, and it again points to the possibility of infinite descent.

Third, if there is a fundamental particle level, this would circumscribe physical possibility. By physical possibility I mean "the set of possible physical events." However, we may be unable to circumscribe physical possibility, as our physics must always include details of the beginning of the universe, which seems a time at which anything was possible. Thus, it must be the case that there is no fundamental particle level, since at some point anything was physically possible.

I don't consider these powerful objections, but they do form an initial volley against reductionism within a modernist metaphysical framework. I believe a more powerful objection can be levied from a more Aristotelian framework, so that's the direction from which I'll make my next argument on the matter.

Strong and Weak Conceptions of Political Authority

Thursday, April 18, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/04/18/strong-and-weak-conceptions-of-political-authority/>

What is the purpose of political authority per se? It appears that the supposed purpose of political authority (hereafter just “authority”) is only to compel obeisance with laws that no private individual or group would be in the right to compel obeisance to. It depends quite crucially on authority being magical, i.e. being possessed of a right to bring forcible compulsion in line with the laws maintained by that authority *pointedly aside from the content of those laws*. In other words, the purpose of authority is the right to compel regardless of the laws that authority is compelling obedience to.

I will use “compulsion” here to mean specifically backing up a law/rule/demand with the actual use or threat to use violence. This applies to any use of violence or threat of violence, and is here morally neutral. A mugger who holds you up at gunpoint in an alley is using compulsion, and firing a gun at said mugger in self-defense is also compulsion. Compulsion is not necessarily moral or immoral. I believe at times it can be justified, and sometimes even required. For instance, I find the case of defending a child from a murderer by the use of compulsion not only justified, but required, in which the negligence to use compulsion as a means of rescuing the child is gravely immoral.

An individual who maintains that the state has its authority due to the content of the laws it enforces by compulsion is neither a realist nor defending an adequately strong conception of authority. If it is only the content of a law/demand justifies compulsion, then it follows that any individual or organization is equally justified in using compulsion to secure obedience. The purpose of an authority is to define and exclude others from deciding what counts as a matter of rightful compulsion. If any person is justified in using compulsion on the basis of its content (e.g. defense of a third party from harm), then authority is not required, and it would be wrong to interfere with those who use compulsion in those cases when it is justified or even required (e.g. it would be immoral for the state to stop me from using compulsion to defend my child from a murderer). Authority that is founded on the content of its laws/demands is too weak to justify the concept of the state, and the individual would be justified in violating laws for which the content do not in themselves justify compulsion, such as laws against drug use or even taxation.

Why taxation? I think it clear that even from a statist perspective one accepts that an individual is only obliged to give over what is asked of him by the tax code. If I am only taxed at 10% on my income, I am justified in giving only 10% and no more. If there is a tax break that allows pretax income put towards healthcare to remain untaxed, then I am justified in not including any income used for healthcare as taxable income.

What the statist requires is a strong conception of authority to make this notion of taxation get off the ground. What this requires is that authority justifies compulsion regardless of the content of the laws/demands. In other words, the authority is justified to use compulsion precisely where a private individual would not. The content can still justify (for instance, self-defense remains justified), but the state gains its authority not from the content of the laws it enforces, but something else. In other words, it is not the content of the law that justifies its enforcement, but the authority of the enforcer that justifies its enforcement. Citizens are obliged to obedience of

the laws not for the content of those laws, but for the authority of that organization which enforces them.

This would get drug laws and taxation justified.

However, a number of objection can be brought forward, for such a conception of authority seems too strong.

For one, it seems that one cannot realistically argue likewise that some content cannot be justified by the authority. If I can be obliged to give over whatever amount of property the state demands, what prohibits that authority from legitimizing murder? After all, if taxation, because it is done by the authority, is not theft, then why should killing, because it is done by the authority, be murder? That is, *the very idea of the authority is that the moral demands which hold for a private individual do not maintain for the political authority.*

The private individual is (generally*) not justified in taking another's property by compulsion, for that would be theft. The authority, when taking another's property by compulsion, does not engage in theft. This would allow to find, by the same form of argument, that when the state kills, it does not engage in murder. If done by the private individual, yes, it would be murder, but remember that we're speaking of an organization that is specifically granted the special moral right to engage in actions which it would be wrong for private individuals to do.

The only way it seems that authority could be circumscribed in order to prohibit killing that would for a private individual be murder is to grant a weak conception of authority, i.e. that it is the content of the law/demand that justifies its enforcement, which as argued above is too weak to support the state. If we grant the legitimacy of the state to kill on the basis of no content in its demand/laws, this is stronger than most statist wish to admit, as it is but absolutism, i.e. the state is justified to do *anything*.

Yet it seems binary, in that we are forced to either anarchism or absolutism. ["Limited government" is incoherent.](#)

Here is another objection, which I will only sketch for now and come back to later. If authority is not justified by the content of its laws/demands, then what does justify it? It is not a social contract (for I certainly dissent, yet my dissent counts for naught as I will be taxed, regulated, and even arrested anyway despite my disagreement). It does not seem that the authority is given by God (though I would, as a Catholic, recognize God's authority to compel obedience, including the right to vest that authority in others). Where does it come from? Is right simply might? That is altogether too simplistic, yet it seems the only thing one might point to. What precisely (in the moral sense) prohibits someone from starting a rival government within the same territory and competing with its service? What justifies the government's elimination of rivals? What initially justifies authority?

Now an individual might just countenance absolutism, if they really think anarchism is worse. Yet I imagine most would prefer the lack of rule to an absolute rule; and if absolute rule is the only internally consistent position for political authority, that leaves only anarchism.

Statism is Slavery

Thursday, April 18, 2013

I've changed my mind about taxation. Taxation is not theft. This is a standard libertarian-anarchist slogan, but I actually must dissent from it. The claim that taxation is theft is to make a simple category mistake. The forcible expropriation of property by the state is not theft because the relation between the citizen and his state is not the same as that which holds between a private individual and another. That is the very idea of the state. What is a crime for the citizen is not a crime for the state, because it is the state that defines the crime in the first place. It has legitimate authority, and this authority justifies precisely the operation of the state in its relation to the citizen.

And what is that relation?

That relation is none other than slavery.

I choose the term slavery as most apt because the notion of the state's authority, presuming its legitimacy, is all-encompassing and comprehensive. As I find the notion of "[limited government](#)" to be absurd, the only internally coherent kind of statism is absolutism, in which the rulers have the right to do and command absolutely whatsoever they wish for whatever reason. One may as well defend "limited slavery," which most would contend is absurd. If slavery is justified and legitimate, then the slaveowner has absolute freedom to dispose of his slaves, as they are his property, however he wishes. It is only this kind of relation that makes sense of the state's right over the citizen, to command and compel to whatever end, be that expropriation of the product of the citizen's labor, the regulation and direction of the citizen's conduct, the conscription into armed battalions, so on and so forth.

Taxation is not theft, for we do not call it theft when the slaveowner takes for himself the product of the slave's labor. We simply recognize that as being part and parcel of the institution of slavery. Statism is not a mere transgression or series of violations of the individual's right; it is a comprehensive and thorough enslavement of the individual.

Naturally, no statist wishes to think himself a slave, and so he will object by any manner of supposed disanalogies between slavery and statism. But the question is, are they essential or accidental differences between slavery and statism? If you want to point out that the state does not do all the same things to its citizens that slaveowners have done to their slaves, you would be to miss the point in a most vulgar manner. The state does not necessarily beat its citizens or make them work the fields, but then the slaveowner does not necessarily beat his slaves or make them work the fields.

What must be done is to find something that the state cannot, per its political authority, command its citizen to do that the slaveowner could not. But what is that? The state may command its citizens to direct their labor to whatever sorts of production, and so may the slaveowner his slaves. The state may imprison its citizens for not obeying its directives, and so may the slaveowner his slaves.

I imagine one will point to certain activities and decisions the state allows its citizens to make for themselves. One is free to move about the country as they wish, to pursue what education and labor they desire, to marry and reproduce as they will. This is true, at least of most states. But this does not break the analogy, for a slaveowner could quite conceivably practice the same sort

of model, giving his slaves leave to go wherever they wish and do whatever they will, all the while retaining his same authority to expropriate and command of the slave whatsoever. Even a slave bound in long chains is still a slave bound in chains.

The state in certain instances even helps to take care of its citizens, but then so may the slaveowner. The slaveowner may provide his slaves with either bare or lavish quarters, and may even provide his slaves fine clothes and dining, but they remain slaves so long as the slaveowner retains his right to expropriate and command of the slave whatsoever. The analogy is not broken just because the slave is shown affection.

A citizen is even allowed to leave his country and renounce his citizenship, and while this seems the most essential break of the analogy, it is actually quite weak a break. Such might a slaveowner allow his slaves, but see that the state has a clear advantage over the typical slaveowner, for the cost of renouncing one's citizenship entails very dear and unpleasant costs to the individual. To leave the country, I must gather all my belongings and sever all relationships with friends and family. I must give up everything I have in this land, and the opportunity to remain freely among those whom I will is denied me. The slaveowner might allow his slaves to leave, but the slaveowner can prohibit the slave to take the slave's own "belongings" with him and to deny the slave re-entry, to maintain an onerous separation between the slave and his relations. Slaveowners do, after all, occasionally turn their slaves free. The only reason for this (accidental) difference in the typical reluctance of a slaveowner to allow his slaves freedom to leave whereas the state may not impose additional costs to a citizen's freedom to leave is because in such a case the former slave needs only walk down the street and find new opportunities, remaining in proximity to his family and friends, while the former citizen must uproot and move abroad. And even then, the citizen will only be trading in one ruler for another.

Even so, the state could yet not provide that opportunity. States have historically denied exit to their citizens, and why not? The citizens are theirs to expropriate and command; if a state can rightfully conscript their citizens into armed battalions, then why not may the state conscript its citizens into "peaceful" operations and likewise deny permission to exit?

Everything a state may say to its citizen as justification for its actions may a slaveowner say to his slave, presuming the legitimacy of such authority. "I have my right by God." States have said this, slaveowners have said this. "You are mine to command. You are mine to direct. You are mine to punish. You are mine to regulate. You are mine to destroy, murder, and maim." So on and so forth, you cannot determine which said what, for the state and the slaveowner occupy the same relation of rights over whom you are theirs to rule.

Statism is slavery. Nothing else explains the comprehensiveness of political authority as justification for the state to command and direct its citizens to whatsoever it will.

Comment on April 27, 2014:

My views have changed substantially since writing this post. As to a moral judgment, you should know I'm quite alright with slavery in the classical sense, and my argument here still holds along those lines.

Democracy as Religion

Sunday, April 21, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/04/21/democracy-as-religion/>

What is the utility, to an individual, of voting? None. In fact, it is demonstrably negative. Furthermore, democracy exacerbates a public goods problem which is contrary to the stated reason for its effectiveness. I will provide a line of reasoning which will show, a priori, the problem of democratic representation in government and give an explanation for the state of political affairs as they are known to actually occur.

First, consider only the likelihood of effecting a national election that will determine the course of federal policy both domestically and abroad. Upwards of 100 million individuals vote, the majority of those votes being for either of two candidates. With a spread between the two candidates being larger than at least a million, you have less than one in a million chance of effecting the outcome. If you stay home, not only will the same thing occur, but you will gain the utility of whatever you decide to do instead. Taking the time to vote is costly, both of time and resources. Even if it takes me only five minutes to cast a vote, is my five minutes equivalent to the $\sim .0000001$ probability of influencing the election? It isn't. As such, voting is an exercise in futility.

However, it gets even worse. We must suppose that the average individual also deliberates over the election. They must take the time to become informed about the candidates who they might vote for, to see who they think it would be best to vote for. They will spend time weighing the total preferability of the two candidates (with many coming to the conclusion that they will vote for "the lesser of two evils"), they will read news article, watch CNN, and discuss the issues with friends and acquaintances. The amount of time and resources invested into learning about the candidates is substantial. If not even 5 minutes is worth it, even less are the hours that will be given over to it in the year preceding the election.

But that is not all. Furthermore, the optimality of democracy requires the average voter to be informed and conscientious in casting their vote. In order to become informed, one must study a variety of subjects. Economics, history, sociology, and logic are the basic sorts of background knowledge one should have in order to cast their vote responsibly. This requires even more time and resources.

All of this, only to cast a vote that will ultimately not influence the election? What a hopeless waste of time. Voting as if one might have an effect on the outcome is a plain failure of reasoning. The "I Voted" sticker may as well say "I'm stupid."

Ah, one will say, it's not the outcome that's important, but that one voted! Why is it important? Because it "holds society together?" That's beside the purpose of voting; the reason it might be picked to help hold society together is because of its effectiveness. Otherwise, it is a vain ritual. The "civic duty" defense strikes me like an atheist insisting prayer is still good for personal development. If it won't change anything, why choose it as essential?

That, and the average voter couldn't even be considered informed or conscientious! The average voter is an economic illiterate without a grasp of history or the sociological import of policy who honestly believes politicians provide arguments meant to be logically (not just rhetorically) persuasive. And why should they become informed? They won't have an effect

anyhow. This is not to mention those voters who vote not on the basis of their conscience, but simply whatever they perceive will benefit them the most no matter the cost to others.

There is no principled method for eliminating from the ranks voters who are unlikely to be informed or conscientious. After all, the very idea of voting is that one's reason is just as good as another's; you might vote for one candidate because you have deliberated, but who are you to say another's vote isn't valid because they voted merely on the basis of hairstyle or the promise to give them more money? While it is most certainly the case that disparities in voting demographics have everything to do with differences in conscientiousness (45% of white men voted for Obama; +90% of blacks voted for Obama; this cannot be explained by mere difference in opinion about the effectiveness of his policies), you couldn't take some given population as the "standard" of informed voting without begging the question or essentially engaging in racial or sexual discrimination. The only method to preclude uninformed, un-conscientious voters from voting is to not let anyone vote. Yes, the informed and conscientious voters (whichever population that is) won't be able to vote, but it is better to not give anyone the chance to "have their voice heard" if the only distinguishable sounds that one can make out in the din is stupidity and selfishness.

Democracy is essentially a religion, the empty vote a ritual that proves it an opiate for the masses.

What is it to Help the Poor?

Sunday, April 21, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/04/21/what-is-it-to-help-the-poor/>

It seems that, for the general gnosticism one finds in Christians, they suddenly become the most vulgar and base of materialists when it comes to helping the poor. "Christ commanded we help the poor!" Yes, so He did; and He is the poor, is He not? Why, then, do such seek only to alleviate the material burden of the poor? It seems there is a bevy of Christians who would destroy souls if only they could satisfy themselves that they are "helping the poor."

"What is it worth a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul?" Indeed, especially if he's only gaining a meager part of the world. Deprivation is the only path to self-actualization. Keep a man satisfied so that he doesn't need to seek out work, and his soul withers away. Work is a form of deprivation that allows one to gain actualization. Subsidize laziness and high time preference behavior (e.g. welfare programs), you get more of it. (If the liberal wants to claim welfare doesn't increase poverty, by their logic you could decrease smoking if you subsidized packs of cigarettes.) The invitation to give up and subsist in a stupor of bare material satisfaction is soul-destroying. There is something wrong, then, with prescribing welfare programs as satisfying Jesus' call to help the poor.

You don't help someone by only alleviating the symptom of spiritual sickness. If the ultimate purpose is to help them gain spiritual wealth ("Build up your riches in Heaven, not here on earth") and satisfying material needs is detrimental to that, then a vulgar materialism is antithetical to Christian charity.

All forms of wealth are the manifestation of spiritual wealth. Be that material, intellectual, or aesthetic, such things are incumbent upon a devotion to accumulation that must be considered spiritual. But to never look beyond that is to reduce the spiritual to vulgar deviations.

This is, at the least, a beginning of an explanation for why I don't support welfare programs to alleviate poverty. Welfare can only serve to increase it, and it does so in a spiritually destructive manner. There must be more to helping the poor.

Concerning the Prohibition of Activities and Substances

Monday, April 29, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/04/29/concerning-the-prohibition-of-activities-and-substances/>

You cannot legally prohibit something without thereby making it more dangerous. Of course the reason for prohibiting it can be due to its own inherent danger (which may or may not be a good reason for doing so, compare drunk driving to getting drunk; there is good reason to prohibit the former but to allow the latter), but in any discussion concerning the danger of something that is already prohibited, it must be admitted that some of the danger is based in its prohibition, and such a danger would either be mitigated or not exist were it freely available. There are at least four reasons for this.

First, when something is prohibited those who partake of it must do so in a concentrated manner. There is relatively less freedom to partake of it in moderation over time, as the times in which one can get away with doing the prohibited thing are fewer and further between. Thus, when it is to be enjoyed, it must be enjoyed to its higher (sometimes literally) extent. This is why, during Prohibition, the average alcohol content of alcoholic beverages was higher than at other times.

Second, activities that are prohibited must be done in secret. You want to make sure that your family, friends, employer, and most importantly, the state and its official representatives do not find out of your pleasures/vices. When an activity is pushed underground in this manner, information concerning itself is less freely available and previous experiences that might be useful in making the activity safer and more enjoyable are harder to come by. This is why children who first drink with their parents are less likely to abuse alcohol at a later point.

Third, criminal activities lead to association with criminals. Though a law may be unjust and unnecessary, it remains the case that willingness to defy the law is highly correlated with dangerous criminal elements. Criminal organizations that are willing to shirk laws concerning the prohibition of certain activities are also more likely to use violence either to protect/gain market share or for the purpose of resolving disputes, especially as appeal to reliable and legitimate forms of arbitration are unavailable. A person who wishes to smoke pot might not otherwise choose to associate with the seedier elements.

Fourth, there cannot be as great a variety of prohibited activities on the market that the consumer might choose from. If an activity is illegal, it becomes much more difficult to gain information about the activity/substance, which entails lower consumer choice. This puts more

power in the hands of the seller, meaning they are able to negotiate even with lower quality or more dangerous forms of the activity. Consumers who are able to obtain more information about the activity they would like to partake of have more power and thus can demand a higher quality (and less dangerous, if they prefer) form of the activity/substance. If there's a dealer who checks less on the quality of what he's dealing, it becomes harder for that information to be shared between consumers and a new dealer found in order that he is avoided.

These are not reasons sufficient to warrant the legalization of substances and activities for which there is some or high inherent danger. However, these are reasons to reconsider the danger actually present in certain things and to not confuse the dangers of activities due to their prohibition with the danger of the activity inherent to itself. For instance, I would reckon that a prohibition of alcohol would lead to higher rates of drunk driving, as recourse to alternative forms of transportation would thus be disincentivized, e.g. if you're drunk and not supposed to be, there is a worry about what a taxi driver will do about you, or you might not be able to call a friend/family member to drive you. Becoming very sick while underage or under the effects of illegal substances will make one less likely to find medical help even if it is thought likely necessary.

These reasons also do work to defuse the social costs of drug abuse. Negative externalities that are otherwise incentivized due to the prohibition would be at least mitigated in the case of their availability. Of course there is the possibility that someone might choose to waste away in their given vice in the case of its legality, but this possibility seems less the case if a person is able to find support from others in the case he is beginning to become a burden due to his abuse of a substance. For instance, there are more alcoholism support communities than there are support communities for those who struggle with drug abuse. Likewise, an individual who feels less stigma for enjoying some presently prohibited activity is more likely to tell a family member of the nature of his participation, which gives that family member more information and better ability to intervene in the case it becomes problematic. Notice, again, that there tend to be familial interventions more likely in the case of alcoholism than, say, overuse of marijuana. Furthermore, prohibited activities tend to be rehabilitated by impersonal systems, e.g. through the courts, where intervention and rehabilitation with the support of family members is more likely available when that activity is not prohibited.

I'll note that, while I do have in mind mostly illegal substances and their dangers, these observations hold for all prohibited activities. Organ donation has the same dangers due to its prohibition, leading to association with criminal elements and less information to the organ seller/consumer, problems that increase its danger where there would otherwise be relatively none.

Obviously these reasons are not sufficient to defuse the prohibition of activities in themselves, but in the case that these additional dangers are greater than the danger of the activity mitigated due to its prohibition, then there becomes a greater reason to not prohibit that activity. By this reasoning drunk driving should remain prohibited (for while its danger is increased due to its prohibition, its prohibition does also lead to lower instances of drunk driving than if it were not prohibited, which seems a net good), but getting drunk shouldn't become prohibited.

Comment on May 1, 2013:

“Legality” is a squishy thing, and I intend it broadly when it comes to anarchism, especially as legality could change from household to household or neighborhood to neighborhood. Certain things will likely stay illegal everywhere (murder, theft), but some things might come with different regulations, such as the carrying of firearms much like the present day. Another aspect of “legality” concerns things that are explicitly legal but are taxed punitively. If a substance is legal but taxed at a rate of 100,000%, is it really legal? Even now in New York where the tax on a pack of cigarettes is effectively 200-300% over half of cigarettes are sold on the black market. So one could say that cigarettes are legal but in such a way that most cigarette consumption is made illegal.

Another consideration of “legality” is what others will voluntarily allow you to do on their property. If we suppose a functioning system of private roads where one pays a toll to drive, is it illegal to drive drunk just because no one will let you drive on their road while drunk? I would myself prefer to drive only on roads where drunk driving isn’t permitted, and I imagine this is a preference many other consumers would have, provided the premium of such a thing was not too high (say, several extra dollars per year). This is assuming that “drunk driving” is even a possibility. If a person is in their car drunk, but the car is driven by a computer, is it drunk driving anymore?

I am apt to believe that in anarchyland the family unit will be much stronger and well-developed. As such, “clan laws” might exist so that the patriarch or a leading group within the family reserves the authority to forcibly send family members to rehabilitation lest that family member be banished/lose family benefits. I’m generally uncomfortable with a government taking on this role, but I’m more accommodating in the case of families. After all, the Somalian legal practice of Xeer seems to stipulate the possibility of such a practice. Of course you will worry about dysfunctional families or those who lack an extensive clan connection, but I think that such a tradition (allowed to actually take place, unlike under statist systems) would more aptly mitigate these problems than a state system. After all, to a certain extent the state’s undertaking of these benefits in society has in one sense driven the dissolution of the family unit and also occurred due to the dissolution of the family unit. As Mises notes, and is analogously relevant, “One regulation begets another.”

Postmodern Politics

Wednesday, May 1, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/01/postmodern-politics/>

The essence of postmodern art is to shock. It no longer remains the point to produce something pretty, but to see what one can get away with, what one can do to infuriate and rankle. It is good to infuriate that which is intrinsically evil (e.g. Christians, whites, conservatives), provided one does not infuriate that which is intrinsically good (blacks, gays, women). Naturally, this leads to a race to outdo everyone else in shock. Pollock’s No. 5 is benign and boring compared to Piss Christ.

Yet Piss Christ is so vehemently predictable that it ceases to produce any permanent sense of awe. Progress (in terms of being more shocking) could only be made by increasingly crude and

obvious measures, even while marginal returns were decreasing. Were people shocked by Piss Christ? Sure, some were. But most people only shrugged and went on with their day. The only group that remains to be exploited are Muslims, but then again they'll actually kill people, and while people have starved for the sake of art, when was the last time someone died for it?

There's an analogy here to politics. As policy, law, and regulation accumulate, the only returns to changing policy that intends to set a politician apart and buy him his votes must be increasingly drastic. The increments that bring one visibility and distinction any longer are greater than the increments before. There is diminishing return to political capital. Yesterday we debate whether the President can kill Americans without trial, today we debate whether the President can kill Americans without trial on American soil, tomorrow we debate whether the President must give any reason to kill Americans without trial on American soil.

Public choice theory tells us politicians act in order to increase their own political capital, being subject to all the same economic laws and incentives that define action in the private sphere. There is no market for a politician who thinks everything's fine as it is, and wants to do everything to make sure we move neither forward nor backward. But as visibility can only be bought by increasing drastic measures, it follows that policy must become increasingly arbitrary, crude, brutal, and tyrannical. That's the only way forward from the present. It should be no surprise when comprehensive behemoths of legislation are passed. The content doesn't matter; getting your name on it does.

"Well, we just need to make voters smarter." You poor fool. Average voter intelligence cannot increase, and as politics increases in complexity and utter unreasonableness, it ceases to be graspable even by a concentrated minority who dedicate their lives to understanding and controlling it. In other words, politics is out of the hands of politicians. If they could get the same visibility from smaller measures of policy change, they would; the radicalization is not for itself, but because that's just what it takes to move things anywhere.

Total collapse is the only endgame. How and when cannot be known; that is the nature of the beast. Every policy change increases uncertainty, which is just to say one cannot gain a better idea about what will happen in the future. There is no "natural" direction of the content of future legislation, this is why I call it arbitrary. "We'll just have to deal with it." But the point is that at some point it can no longer be dealt with. If a neighbor on the far end of the street becomes increasingly capricious and arbitrary to those growing gardens on his street, you will rethink your decision to grow a garden at all. People stop working, businesses stop hiring, capitalists stop investing, everything falls to pieces. The government comes to the "rescue", and then we're in serfdom.

You can only hope the masters are as restrained as antebellum slaveowners.

The Economist's Hustle

Thursday, May 2, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/02/the-economists-hustle/>

The things most important in life, such as pleasure, virtue, friendship, knowledge, family, and faith, which we can refer to as overall welfare, cannot be measured. You cannot ask people to rate their welfare, since whatever number they might give is perfectly subjective, and it is often the case that people do not realize how good (or bad) they have it. There are certain things which can be measured that have a general degree of correlation to welfare, so we can arguably measure who and where there exists greater welfare, provided what intuitively links welfare with these measurable things holds. It is not perfect, and there are exceptions, but it can be argued that these measurable things, *ceteris paribus*, will show who has higher welfare.

Why do we believe there to be a correlation between the measurable and certain aspects of welfare? It seems clear that qualitative forms of wealth such as virtue and friendship lead to a greater degree of material wealth. While we cannot measure virtue and friendship, in seeing that these things lead to more material wealth, we can suppose that greater material wealth indicates the prevalence of these things more often than not. Again, exceptions can be pointed out, such as the miserable and lonely millionaire, or the very friendly and sociable bum, but the point is that these are exceptions to the general rule. You can see this in the way that rates of divorce and single motherhood are lower among the (materially) wealthy than among the poor. This does not seem to be accidental; the virtues that lead to stronger family values also lead to the accumulation of material wealth, as they both represent the product of low time preference. As such, it does not seem fallacious to conclude that wealth correlates with stronger family values, and that poverty correlates with weaker family values.

There are a great number of these sorts of correlations such that GDP can actually be a very useful indicator of welfare in a country. However, and note this, the correlation holds because of the freedom of the actors within the region. If you prohibit the freedom of action, then the correlation is weakened. Ergo, GDP does not necessarily entail higher welfare. There are many ways to increase GDP even while decreasing welfare, or at least decreasing the degree of correlation.

This is where the economist comes in. The economist is interested in, so I am told by my economics professors, increasing GDP. There is simply nothing else the economist is capable of doing for society.

The problem is that, in noting the correlation, what becomes policy is the attempt to increase the value of the measurable thing that indirectly correlates with the good. But, if all one is doing is increasing the measurable, and doing so serves to separate the connection between the qualitative good we're looking to maximize and the measurable quantity, then increasing the measurable quantity ceases to serve its function. Policy becomes an activity in futility.

How might the connection be severed? Consider GDP. GDP correlates with overall welfare in the case that it is composed of voluntary exchanges, for voluntary exchanges are welfare-increasing overall. However, if you begin negating and/or prohibiting voluntary exchanges (e.g. stealing, subsidizing), then the correlation is weakened. Yet the prohibition of voluntary exchanges could feasibly boost GDP dramatically, and often non-voluntary exchanges are included in GDP. Military spending is often a large component of GDP, yet it is arguable that \$100 expropriated from me and then spent on a bomb reduces overall welfare, while allowing me to keep that \$100 so I might spend it on groceries increases overall welfare. Yet such a problem is rarely, if ever, accounted for by the economist, and if military spending increases GDP, they will say the economy is growing, no matter what that may have done to reduce

welfare. These correlations only mean something in the case that free market operations are allowed to proceed; the less the market is actually working, the less meaningful the measurement. But economists specialize in finding ways to game the economy, so that the measurements come up all fine, no matter that these measurements no longer represent reality.

I wish I could say this was a critique of GDP, but the critique covers virtually every economic measurement economists care to find. Lower interest rates indicate higher wealth and lower time preference, both of which are good things; but then the economist separates the interest rate from the consumer's preference for liquidity, and thus low interest rates cease to represent higher wealth and lower time preference. Home ownership correlates with family values; but then the economist wishes to incentivize people to purchase homes no matter that they might not be able to afford them. So on and so forth, for so many things in the economy, until it becomes clear that the "economy" is a simulacra, completely divorced from reality and manufactured by the political-technocratic elite to persuade the people that they can and are making things better. It is a kind of hustle, a mere scam, Orwellian doublethink. Economics is no longer a social science, only an extension of political ideology.

The Weakness of Argument

Friday, May 3, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/03/the-weakness-of-argument/>

Philosophy is very good for broadening and condensing one's understanding, but it is remarkably poor for providing one conclusions. If anything, it will ultimately lead one to refrain from strongly standing by their beliefs. One man's modus ponens is another's modus tollens, allowing one to deny the conclusion of any argument by simply supposing the reality of its opposite. Where one might construct a problem of evil by arguing

1) God and gratuitous evil are incompatible

2) There is gratuitous evil

3) Therefore, God does not exist

it is possible, and perfectly valid, for one to respond by arguing

1) God and gratuitous evil are incompatible

2') God exists

3') Therefore, gratuitous evil does not exist

From any given two facts that are mutually exclusive, you can always prove the non-existence of one by supposing the reality of the other! The two facts do not indicate of themselves, by their incompatibility, which ought to be accepted and which ought to be rejected (and maybe both should be rejected!).

Yet it remains always the case, no matter how one goes at it, that every dispute shall come down to a fundamental binary incompatibility. As given above, the argument can clearly be

expanded so that the premises are given their own support, but this only pushes the same problem down further. It will always come down to some fundamental incompatibility. And how shall that fundamental incompatibility be resolved? Ultimately, we cannot resolve it by any further appeal to argument. Again, for any A and not-A concerning how things are, these do not indicate of themselves which is the case and which isn't. At best, we can say the understanding of itself grasps which of the two can only be the case, but this is not demonstrated by argument. Its truth can be illustrated, but this is not the same.

For instance, we can suppose we come to the fundamental compatibility between whether there is something or not. The fact of the incompatibility does not establish which is the case. However, we can say that by saying there is something that is the case that we grasp its truth by necessary intuition, and so the proposition that there is not anything at all must be rejected, since it just destroys the coherence of understanding. But this is not an argument. It is an appeal to the understanding, to suggest that one think this way because it seems necessitated by the means of our reasoning.

Any of those things that are more interesting, such as the existence of God or the morality of lying, will come down to these incompatibilities, and our decision between the two is a matter of intuition. We can hope that our intuition grasps the real, but it seems beyond us to suppose that our intuitive sense is infallible.

No argument proves anything, it can only help broaden and condense the understanding. For this there yet remains the worry that it will rather only cloud the understanding.

Must we become skeptics? I think it clear that I do not know.

Technical Omnipotence and Possibility

Monday, May 6, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/06/technical-omnipotence-and-possibility/>

Many seem to take the notion of omnipotence to mean some sort of "really strong ability," as though being omnipotent is like being Superman, only bigger. This is a completely incorrect notion, and it should be pointed out that omnipotence is technically unrelated to really powerful physical forces. We might be able to say that omnipotence includes the power to manipulate and/or produce powerful physical forces, but omnipotence need not, and maybe couldn't, include such a power.

But if we're precluding something from omnipotence, doesn't it cease to be omnipotence per se? If we're saying "x is omnipotent and x cannot y" how are we not just stating a plain logical contradiction? What is required for omnipotence is that the thing to be done is a logically possible thing, i.e. that it is a thing to be done at all. We can illustrate this with the square circle.

There cannot be a square circle. God in His omnipotence cannot instantiate a square circle. Why not? Is this because God is just not "powerful" enough to make it happen? Just add more gas, suddenly "everything" becomes possible? Not at all. A "square circle" is actually not even a thing at all. It refers to no possible state of affairs. If it is no thing, it is nothing; as such, when we

say “There is nothing God cannot do,” we are meaning exactly that God cannot do those “things” which are not actually things. We must be careful to not confuse grammatically correct with the actually possible. Only a fool would insist on confusing the two, at which point you have a very poor atheism indeed, if you can only support it by the insipid reluctance to admit that the impossible is the strictly not-possible. If God could do the impossible, it wouldn’t be very impossible, would it?

This brings about an important point that I don’t know how best to state. I can say it, that’s not an issue, but I want to be able to say that omnipotence is not so “unlimited” as we might otherwise suppose. Obviously this is not an “unlimited” in the strict metaphysical sense, but in the Superman sense.

Consider, for a moment, the hypothesis of solipsistic idealism. If I am the entirety of the world, then I am God. (This is not me being egoistic, I’m just pointing out a metaphysical conclusion contingent upon the premise of solipsistic idealism.) If I am God, then the entirety of what may possibly be done is whatever I may do. As such, while I am omnipotent, “world creating” is beyond the purview of omnipotence. “Creating a world” would be just not a metaphysical possibility. Traditional theists shouldn’t think a problem in its own right for the notion of omnipotence, since it’s circumscribed by the (hypothetical) necessity of solipsistic idealism. “Creating a world” would be tantamount to “creating God,” which theists are opposed to. Well, same here; if you accept solipsistic idealism, Creation as it is understood by traditional theists is impossible. Omnipotence includes less than we might have otherwise thought.

Another point for consideration. Whatever the set of possibilities happens to include, we should want to say that omnipotence is the power to instantiate any of those particular possibilities. There is a perfect parity between the set of possibilities and the set of things an omnipotent entity can instantiate. But if, for two sets, all members are identical, then the sets are identical. “The possible” and “What God may instantiate” mean just the same thing.

This is much more interesting than we might initially suppose. It seems that many would be less inclined to accept that we can have a knowledge of “What God may instantiate,” but there are many philosophical theories that require, for whatever is possible, it may be known by us (in the theoretical sense). But if those two sets of things are identical, then my knowledge of what is possible is knowledge of what God may do. My knowledge of what is possible is suddenly seen to be a kind of knowledge of God.

This is perfectly in line with my [modal set ontological argument](http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/07/the-moral-of-the-two-runners/).

The Moral of the Two Runners

Tuesday, May 7, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/07/the-moral-of-the-two-runners/>

Once upon a time, there was a runner. He would run through the city and through the parks and through the woods, and was free to run as far and for as long as he wished. He was blessed to have legs in perfect condition, and they took him far afield. With his running he would deliver all sorts of things to people throughout the town, and his services were greatly appreciated.

The sheriff saw that, while the runner's services were all well and good, there would be a common good served if the runner weren't able to run so well, and the sheriff would take on some of the running services for himself. So the sheriff decreed that, in order to run, the runner must put braces on his legs so that he could not run as well.

Another person in town saw his chance, so he began running and making deliveries throughout the town. His services were greatly appreciated and, being free from the braces placed on the other runner, he soon was making deliveries that were previously fulfilled by the other runner.

But the people thought it was unfair, so they called to the sheriff. The sheriff was all too glad to take on more services for himself, so instead of making things fair by letting the first runner take his braces off, [he made things fair by making the second runner put on braces as well](#).

Skeptic Shaming, Incivility, and Outright Ad Hominem

Wednesday, May 8, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/08/skeptic-shaming-incivility-and-outright-ad-hominem/>

Likely you have encountered this. Either as you go through your day or somewhere on Facebook, someone has said something that you find very controversial and is worth being questioned. However, you refrain from doing so, because you know that the individual in question is not forwarding a proposition in the course of a dialogue, but is forwarding a proposition which they jealously maintain and cannot stand to hear the least questioning of it. In fact, you are agnostic as to whether they are capable of handling a discussion with someone who disagrees without resorting to skeptic shaming, incivility, and outright ad hominem.

I grant there is a time when sometimes someone is just saying something to say something, and discussion isn't the purpose, but in the case that it is a venue where discussion is tacitly the purpose, these reactions are highly inappropriate. Such might be granted on a general basis, but suppose I want to ask, for instance, whether [slut-shaming](#) is a bad thing? Or what if you don't think The Patriarchy is anything more credible than any other conspiracy theory? Skepticism towards religion is lauded, skepticism towards the modern idols is unforgivable. Ultimately nothing has changed, save the words.

Skeptic shaming is the resort of someone who has nothing else to go on, someone who (I must presume) is literally incapable of defending their beliefs. A skeptic shamer flouts their refusal to engage in discussion and expects (and probably does receive) praise. Why is this? Perhaps it is just an inevitable human shortcoming, this ability to be gripped by ideology so that it structures one's entire worldview. (And the effervescently implacable skeptic in me wonders whether it is even possible to escape ideology.)

Perhaps you'll note that, for my wide-ranging discussions on everything from [the economics of fiat money](#), [a recalcitrant skepticism](#), and [the possible socioeconomic arrangement anarchist societies might take](#), I'm curiously silent when it comes to feminism. Aren't I a conservative who likely has things to say? Well, yes, I am. Why my silence? Because of exactly this issue. Most people can't work their way through the issues of feminism and sexuality without being totally

lost. This is because it is observation distorting. A person who has drunk the Kool-Aid really is unable to see the contradictions of the system. It should be no wonder that they don't want to have a calm, rational discussion, because they're actually just incapable of it.

Generalizing? To be sure. But it is the overwhelming verdict of my experience. I had a friend literally up and walk away when I pointed out that, as fitness correlates to beauty, [we can only conclude that people are less beautiful than they were 30 years ago](#). How can this be offensive? It's a fact.

You think we should change our views about beauty? Okay, then you can go fuck a fatty. It'll leave more (though it remains a very small number) actually fit girls for me. What, am I supposed to pretend I don't find fitness preferable to fatness? Everyone does.

This is a curious aspect regarding the politically correct. What is politically incorrect is often just what everyone's thinking.

I've said before that, in order to make the world a better place, you need to know how the world actually works and be willing to work with it. It is on this basis that I've defended a number of economic arrangements most think are evil, such as [sweatshops](#). The same must follow for aspects of the world such as intersexual interaction, attraction, rape, promiscuity, social dynamics, moralizing, divorce, single motherhood, and so on. If we're only willing to deal with things as we think they should be, we'll never achieve change because we aren't dealing with the things as they actually are.

The issues of feminism et al. fit under the penumbra of social issues I've taken on before, so I'm going to go ahead and do that here on the blog.

Psychologizing and Argument

Wednesday, May 8, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/08/psychologizing-and-argument/>

It may not always be inappropriate to bring up the psychological motivations people have for their beliefs. In fact, there must be some appropriate time, given that we, as humans, are psychological creatures. We should always like for our motivations to be that of pure reason, i.e. "I came to my beliefs purely through reflection," but often our reflections begin with unexplored intuitions grounded in experience.

Consider myself for instance. Would it be wrong to suggest that my hatred of divorce doesn't go back to the event of my own parents' divorce? Probably not. And my hatred of divorce ends up motivating a lot of my other beliefs concerning family and sexuality. Does my motivation make me wrong? No. Is it something I should take into account? Yes. If our sight is pushed to something we'd previously been blind to, we ought to be suspicious if that pushing was a nonrational event.

Consider the interest death penalty advocates have for those affected by the murder of a family member and whether their feelings help to change their mind about the justice of execution. I'm

not suggesting this is either right or wrong, but there is still something very interesting going on here that is worth understanding. The death penalty advocate wants to suggest that the abolitionist was previously blind to a sound intuition that is awakened in the event of a loved one's murder. Maybe that is the case. On the other hand, another abolitionist might suggest that the event doesn't give one insight, but is actually blinding. "Blinded by grief." They reply that one is supposed to be willing to forgive whatever evils we suffer, since we plead to God that He "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." On the other hand, execution and forgiveness may be compatible.

My point here is not the morality of execution for crimes, but how nonrational motivations are often used as premises in a rational argument. "The strength of my feeling" is a justification. Indeed, nobody will begrudge the individual who advocates for justice because they have suffered injustice, and we often see it as a noble endeavor.

But these are in the case of our own motivations. My motivations are fair game in an argument only in the case that I make them be. When someone attempts to refute my argument by attending only to the motivations of my belief, it is fallacious. "Christians believe because they are scared of death." True or no, that doesn't form an argument, and it leaves untouched the reasons an individual believer might present.

Suppose I were afraid that a loved one had died because of something I'd heard on the news. I call their phone and they answer. I thus form the belief that they are alive and well. I have the motivation to believe they are alive and well, and I also have justifying reasons for my belief. It would generally be taken as beside the point to attack my belief on the basis of what motivations I have to believe. Such ought be considered the same for religious or irreligious belief.

Psychologizing as an attempt to refute another's argument is unsound, and [can just lead to mutually assured destruction](#). Yet psychologizing can be grounds for formulating an argument in favor of something, and it is even interesting at times to get at the biographical or [aesthetic motivations](#) a person has for their beliefs.

Gender Roles and Civility

Wednesday, May 8, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/08/gender-roles-and-civility/>

My friend made an offhand comment to me about how Eastern European women are markedly more civil and polite compared to their Western counterparts. This happens to be similarly borne out by my experience with Eastern European and Southeast Asian women. What is similar between these two cultures, speaking broadly? Strong gender roles. This suggests a thesis to me which goes along with some thought I've had about the purpose of social roles and what is considered politeness. The proclivity of women from societies with strong gender roles to be generally more polite, more civil, more demure, and ultimately easier to get along with seems no accident.

Gender is a social construct. You probably thought this claim would form a rebuttal to whatever argument I would make, but it actually forms an essential component. Social constructs are conventions. This means there is room for difference in how those constructs are exemplified. Politeness is another social construct, and likely one of the most plastic. However, politeness serves an important social role, because it defines our social expectations and facilitates social interaction. As humans, we simply do not have the time or mental reserves necessary to form new rules of interaction as we go about our day. This means there is a role for shortcuts that expedite the process of coming to terms with someone else, so that whatever end is to be served by some particular interaction, it can be triggered and finished with defined signs. There is no particular reason a handshake should be taken to signal the intent of goodwill, greeting, or formal agreement, but there is a particular reason for us to pick out some sign to signal that. We do so because it would be exhausting to take time to negotiate the formalities at every occasion. As such, we fall into habits and convention.

But in order for habits and convention to take place, they must take into regard the particular placement of the individuals and the roles they are taking in the interaction. Part of following the form of social interaction is to take on roles. These can be very broad or very specific, but if people are not able to figure out their role, they aren't able to determine the purpose of the social interaction, and people will be made uncomfortable, eliciting various reactions. Those with more social grace can handle a greater variety of social faux pas, but even the most obstreperously role-defying individual can move from the most benign to rudeness. For example, consider how you would feel if someone were to walk up to you (which you take to signal some intent), only to stand there and stare at you without saying anything. You might say "Yes..?" "Can I help you?" or "Is there something you would like?" in order to provoke them to take on a defined role, so that you know what sort of role to take on, but if they persistently defy social conventions, then there's no way for you to proceed to some end, and if you can't proceed, you're left confused, which is an uncomfortable feeling.

As mentioned above, roles can be very broad or specific. For instance, when you order food at a restaurant, the waiter is playing the role of server, and you are playing the role of customer. The legal system even has roles explicitly spelled out, so that procedure is observed, because it is understood that procedure is an essential part of the judicial system. The procedure is the difference between justice and vigilantism (assuming vigilantism can never serve justice, but that's another issue). For any social interaction, you can identify roles and rules that define what the person in that role can and cannot do.

The purpose of roles is so that people know what social expectations they're meant to fulfill, and how to fulfill them. Politeness and civility fall into the context of fulfilling social expectations; in fact, they essentially are the fulfilling of social expectations. Being polite is nice not for itself, but because by doing so you help to avoid making someone else feel uncomfortable. Rudeness, on the other hand, whether intentional or not, will make someone else feel uncomfortable, and feeling uncomfortable, we tend to either avoid the person who makes us feel uncomfortable or to punish them.

Gender roles are just another instance of roles in society. Socially constructed? Convention? Roles which facilitate social interaction? Yes.

Now suppose that, for whatever reason, there was a concerted campaign to invalidate certain kinds of roles in society. For instance, what if the role of defendant in court were devaluated?

This would arguably hinder the carrying out of justice, since it would put the procedure of the judicial system into disarray. Without well-understood and widely agreed to roles, which form an essential part of the civility and effectiveness of social interactions, the end meant to be served by some particular social interaction is more difficult to obtain.

The West has much weaker gender roles than you find in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia. This means, in other words, that men and women have less well-defined roles for social interaction when it comes to intersexual interaction. As such, when a man (or a woman, but it's usually the man, let's be honest) approaches a woman with romantic intent, because neither have reliable gender roles to rely on that would otherwise facilitate their exchange, it is more difficult for the exchange to occur in a way that makes both parties comfortable. This leads to the paradox that, while women are uncomfortable approaching by nature, they are also uncomfortable being approached, because the roles are so murky and difficult to figure out.

In fact, it may be even more difficult because women have infused to their conscience from a young age that taking on the demure, feminine role in respect to a confident, masculine man is unconscionably anti-feminist. After all, [women have admitted](#) to feeling the pangs of guilt when they are tempted towards traditional mothering roles rather than abandoning their children to daycare and pushing onward with their career in high business. [Or for wanting a boyfriend](#). Or a husband. Or dear lord, children! Feminism has been telling women for a generation that it's bad to want to be feminine. It shouldn't be any surprise, then, that this makes women feel bad for taking on the feminine role in social interactions, which mucks up the social interaction and makes everyone mutually rude. To condense this to an easy slogan, feminism makes women bitches and men dicks. This is because it denies to both sexes the previously reliable means of determining how to interact with each other which generally came down to "I'm a guy, she's a girl and I like her, therefore I act like xyz..." Now, it's a process of "I'm a guy, she's a girl and I like her, but this doesn't tell me how to act, so I need to also figure out xyz, then I'll know whether to act like abc or 123 or alpha-beta-gamma or..." Does that sound more difficult? It is.

But in places where gender roles remain strong and women don't feel guilt for falling into them, social interactions are easier. And where social interactions are overall easier, it's easier to not be perceived as rude. In other words, stronger gender roles facilitate civility.

I'm not passing any moral judgment yet, I'm only making a social analysis. This explains why it is the observation of world travelers and those who have experience with women from other countries why women from societies with stronger gender roles are more likely to be perceived as civil and polite.

Comment on July 10, 2013:

You're making a false dichotomy. Taking on a role does not diminish our manifestation of character; rather, all instances of the manifestation of character, within social interaction, are manifest *through* social roles. It's like fashion. Nearly everyone wears clothes that are within the mainstream of fashion and they reject whatever is far outside it, yet they still would maintain that their fashion choices are their own. Likewise for the apprising of social roles; *how* one puts it on is one's character.

Social Interaction as a Game

Thursday, May 9, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/09/social-interaction-as-a-game/>

When I was young, I was diagnosed with autism. Whether or not that is a correct diagnosis, it is certainly the case that I have a different handle on the social realm, and I have been able to maintain a decent level of well-adjustedness through constant thought and practice. Whereas most have come to their social character as a matter of mere practice, I have developed my social character through comprehensive intellectualizing of the matter of social interactions. This has afforded me a different perspective, which I find very valuable now that I appear to have moved past a level of social interaction that my peers remain mired in. It seems most are inclined to regard my approach to social interaction as coldly analytic which perhaps stems from the fact that I just am coldly analytic, or as though I act disingenuous to friends and acquaintances, but I'd like to explain that this means of approach is at once superior in method and also genuinely personable.

All social interactions are games. Every social interaction (which I will also call just "interaction"), be it between any number of participants, has definable rules and victory conditions. Understanding these rules and how they contribute to victory for one or more of the participants, you will be able to lead any interaction towards your intended goal with sufficient practice. What are we to say, that interactions do not have rules? Of course they do. Any given faux pas is merely the violation of some expectation, some rule guiding the interaction. If you order a coffee from the barista and she begins telling you a very personal story about her exploits last night with her boyfriend, this will put you off your guard since it violates your expectations about how a coffee transaction is to occur.

The rules of interaction develop because they allow us to rest our minds. It would simply be exhausting to always consciously at the beginning of every interaction develop rules for how the interaction shall take place; instead, the actors shall take their places automatically. Becoming conscious of such an activity does not make it any less a game, nor does remaining ignorant of it.

This may seem an overly cynical approach to social interaction, but I will show that my consciously intellectualized approach to interaction is perfectly authentic and advantageous for not only myself but for the other participants.

I believe what seems most troubling to those who have otherwise treated their social interactions as a "Just do what feels right" activity is that a purposely intellectualized approach to one's participation in interactions lacks authenticity. If I don't act like I always do, then I won't even really be presenting who I am.

To this, I have two things to respond with. In the first case, there is nothing de-authenticating about playing a game. In fact, I believe most intuitively recognize that those activities we usually call games can be among our most authentic experiences. Baseball, Monopoly, Apples to Apples, Charades, and so on, are all games which we play at and even attempt to purposely win through the use of our intellect, yet they are clearly also authentic forms of experience. I would even maintain that if you're not trying to win through purposive intellectualization of the

activity, you're failing to participate as thoroughly as you could, and thus a form of authenticity is failed to be attained.

Secondly, however you present yourself is who you are. How you present yourself is how you work to get what you want from social interactions. You cannot say you want nothing from your social interactions; if you truly wanted nothing from the social interactions you choose to have, you wouldn't pursue after them. There is nothing wrong with admitting that one gets into an interaction because there is something one seeks in doing so. This could be purely material, e.g. the attempt to complete a transaction to obtain coffee, but of course interactions can also have highly personal and emotionally significant payoffs. Friendship, companionship, even love, these are the endgames of certain forms of interaction. What, you think I approached you at the bar just because I like to talk? True, I do like to talk and be the center of attention, but I'm also interested in learning about you and, if it seems right, become more intimate. If you want to say that you like how you present yourself in interactions, but you don't get what you want from your interactions, then you are saying a contradiction. The ends of your interaction is just what kind of person you present yourself as. As it is noted by Game, if you present yourself in a "mere companionship" frame to a girl, she will not be interested in sex, and you will be left in the friendzone. In other words, if you wanted more from the interaction but you acted in a way that lacks harmony with your intent, you're playing the wrong game.

Is the intellectualization of your interactions as a game manipulative? I don't see how it is. Every action undertaken by an individual is the attempt at some kind of manipulation of the world, in order that the world produced by the action is (so at least the agent thinks) superior than how it likely otherwise would've been. I am "being manipulative" by brushing my teeth, and likewise are there intended consequences of my acting a certain way towards someone. Taking care to use particularly those sorts of actions that are more likely to bring about the ends I intend is just what it is to be rational. Not taking care to do so, as the emotivist about interaction seems to hold is authenticating, is just to not bring forward the very thing into your interactions that makes you a human being. If you won't bring what intelligence you possess into your interactions, you're just being stupid.

Whatever results of an interaction, assuming the condition of reciprocal free exchange, is preferred by both actors. As such, if I meet a girl and, by purposely presenting myself a certain way, bring her to bed, I have not manipulated her or somehow violated her will. I have simply provided to her something that she likes. What can be wrong with being the way that someone prefers? It seems at most one might say that a person in that instance doesn't "know my true self," but what is the true self except how I present myself to others? Being highly adaptive to my social situation would be just a part of who I am.

Don't games imply a winner and a loser? Not at all. Some games are zero sum, but many games are positive sum, meaning that mutual cooperation brings both participants to a more preferred place. Even an explicit game is within a game, e.g. we play Apples to Apples because it is fun, no matter who wins or loses within the game of Apples to Apples. If a person is a sore loser, he plays the social game poorly, and so people may choose to associate less with that person. He, and everyone else, will be better off if he makes sure to step back and see what's important, which is not winning Apples to Apples, but enjoying socialization with others. As such, not only is intellectualizing and improving your social character beneficial to yourself, it is beneficial to everyone else.

If you wish to improve your social character, then you can not go wrong in purposely applying your intellect in order to understand what kind of game a given interaction is, and how you might play it to bring about your intended consequences. I daresay doing so myself has improved my own social experience.

Comment on May 10, 2013:

A game doesn't need to end with both being winners in order to be a game. The same for social interactions. Granted, we can say we ought to make social interactions positive sum wherever possible (but not all can or even ought to be; consider court).

Compassion and Capitalism

Saturday, May 11, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/11/compassion-and-capitalism/>

There can never be gains to an individual if opportunities are denied to him. If it is an opportunity that wouldn't make me better off, I (likely) wouldn't accept it. On the other hand, if it will make me better off, you're an asshole to deny me access to something better. Allowing opportunities to be made available to an individual can only make them better off. Having more options is having more power. If you have more power, you can negotiate for yourselves better things. This is a process which must take place if a society is ever to become prosperous. Prosperity comes about through time and work. Only fools believe in "get rich quick" schemes.

If you're a fool to believe in "get rich quick" schemes, and you're an asshole to deny someone a better opportunity, we can only conclude that preventing people from bringing those in poverty new opportunities are the world's most foolish assholes. As such, compassion and capitalism are not only compatible, compassion compels us to accept capitalism.

I will quickly point out that capitalism means nothing but voluntary exchange. Do not muddle the definition in order to argue about something else. I'm talking about voluntary exchange. If you think capitalism means something else, fine, but as I'm using the term (and my support thereof), I mean specifically and exclusively *voluntary exchange*. If you're talking about someone forcibly depriving of someone else, you're not talking about capitalism. As such, if you want to talk about governments and gangs, you're not talking about that. Also, for the dimwitted, notice I am speaking of *forcible deprivation*. If you want to talk about how someone is "forced" to accept a shitty job because otherwise they'll starve, once again, you're not talking about capitalism. That is a problem intrinsic to life, and the production of consumable goods is the solution to it. If you want to get the two confused, that is your problem, but those of us who want to speak about reality and not ideology will recognize that the forces that impel individuals to seek work are distinct. A coercive force enacted by people, whether in the name of business, tradition, or state, is usually evil, admitting of few exceptions. A force intrinsic to the human condition, such that one gains their life only by the sweat of their brow is natural, but it is not an evil perpetuated by anyone. You can rail against it all you want, but you're not solving it by railing against evils you perceive in people.

My thesis is very simple. You must allow opportunities to be offered. This goes not only for what you would perceive as a very good opportunity, but also very shitty opportunities. I say this because like above; if it is an opportunity a person wouldn't accept, it is because they think there is something better they can get, but if it is an opportunity they will accept, it is because they perceive it to be the best opportunity available to them. If you would take away that opportunity, you're taking away their best opportunity. Taking away their best opportunity *leaves them only with options worse even than that one.*

Would it be nice for someone who's best option is still a shitty option to have a nicer option? Yes, I would never deny that. However, that's just what poverty is; to have poor options. I speak not of those people in America who can get ahead if they work hard, but people in places where even hard work has poor returns. This is a regrettable situation, but again, you must realize that not only is this intrinsic to the human condition, the shit must be taken care of before the better options are available. You must understand why someone would think working in a dangerous mine or working 12 hours a day in a sweatshop is their best option.

Why don't they choose to merely subsist, to just get by? In many cases, it is because they want to provide better opportunities for their own children. A father works an extra day a week in order to afford school for his children, so that they don't have to do what he does. Would you deny that opportunity to the father, insisting that no one be allowed to offer him that opportunity? You're an asshole if you do. You can tell me you would like for him to have better options, but you're not giving him better options by taking away his best. If you take a person's best options, all you have done is forcibly deprive him of something good. That makes you the evil person, not those who risked their own money and spent their own time bringing this better opportunity to the father. If they hadn't brought him that opportunity, there's no necessary reason anyone else would've, and it's even unlikelier someone would have chosen to bring them an even better option than that.

On the other hand, the father is likely to have better options available if more opportunities do come in. A person with more options has more to negotiate with, because if someone else won't give him more, he can pick another job, or another job, or another. But if he has fewer options (which is what you leave him if you deny the importation of new opportunities), then he has less power to negotiate, and is thus poorer.

This is the reason we in America are wealthy. Because back in the day our parents and grandparents took the shitty jobs, so that their kids could have better opportunities. Then those kids grew up, took less shitty jobs, but shittier than they needed to, so that their own kids could have better options. So on and so forth. This is the process of industrialization. To be wealthy is to have more options; to have more options is to be wealthy. If you would eliminate options from someone, you would only make them poorer. If you would let opportunities proliferate, then so will prosperity proliferate in time. It will take time, because remember, there are no valid "get rich quick" schemes.

If you are compassionate and care about the poor, you will let them have more opportunities. If you will not do it yourself, at least let others do so; and frankly, if someone else is willing to do so where you do nothing, which one proves themselves more compassionate?

Comment on May 13, 2013:

Governments provided the papers granting “rights” to that land? Then I’m not talking about that.

Capitalism \neq everything a capitalist does. Medicine \neq everything a medical doctor does. You should be careful not to confuse the two.

Shame Shame

Saturday, May 11, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/11/shame-shame/>

It seems that a crucial aspect of moral maturity is praising the laudable and blaming the contemptible. Yet only one of these is ever given attention, while the other is often shirked. Why should this be? I cannot see the reason why we should want to harm someone’s feelings, especially if that person has morally harmed another. Indeed, the purpose of justice, even its rehabilitative aspect, includes punishment. Discipline and improvement are not without being able to admit the reality of the less preferable. If one can’t see the problem, how will they fix it? Indeed, not only should one see the problem in order that they can fix it, but there are times when they ought to see it, and being unable, or refusing, to see it is a mark of moral immaturity.

A person who does something evil ought to feel bad for doing it. This is one of the things we attempt to instill into children when they commit wrongdoings. If they will not feel bad for doing it, that is even worse, is it not? We recognize it as at least a psychological inhibition, to not feel guilt, if it is not also a moral inhibition, especially in the case where they are capable of feeling guilt but choose not to. How might an individual choose not to feel guilt? It is not so simple as one saying “I know I shouldn’t feel guilt for this, but I simply will not.” Rather, a person would engage in rationalization, so that they place a wedge between what they ought to know and their own epistemic status regarding that belief. As such, a person will say to convince themselves that they aren’t in the wrong because “It is not my fault, because I was drunk, and anyways, my husband hasn’t been giving me the attention I deserve.” Rationalization is palliative to the feeling of guilt, but it does not remove the guilt. A person who is never responsible for their plight is a person unacquainted with moral reality.

How much worse it must be in society if it becomes shameful to try and show someone how they really look in the mirror! If we make a move to accept a person’s flaws, rather than signaling the good for their improvement, we can only breed a society of moral toddlers who never mature to the stage of psychological development we call taking responsibility for oneself, or adulthood. If toddlers require adult supervision, and people will not grow up, then they need an adult to instill values into them externally. In other words, we ought to bring back shame.

This is contrary to our present intuitions. We shouldn’t tell a person they’re bad for doing bad things! We should help them instead! But by that logic, they don’t need help. Shaming is helpful to society, even if not necessarily to the individual. People who see the rewards that are heaped on others for bad behavior will refrain from it themselves. Take away that disincentive, and people are less likely to discipline themselves. Take away shame, and you can only increase the behavior in question. But if the behavior in question ought to be minimized, then shame is an inherent feature of that minimization.

The path to self-improvement, as I understand it, features three key realizations. First, you must understand the way you suck. If you cannot accept that it is a feature which sucks, and that you possess that feature, you cannot accept that it ought to be changed. Second, if you cannot accept that you are responsible for it, you will not see that it is within your responsibility to change it. Third, if you cannot accept that the benefits are greater than how much it will suck to change yourself, you will not undertake the work to improve yourself.

Shame improves the odds that each of these realizations will occur. Being told relentlessly by society that a feature of your character (or body) is detrimental should help one to want to see that it is a problem. Having everyone else assume it is your responsibility, and thus able to be changed, will help you believe it can be changed. And lastly, increasing how much it sucks to have that flaw will only make the benefits all the greater.

But it would make that person feel bad to be shamed! Yes, that's the point. Congratulations on understanding what shaming is all about. The point is that someone feels bad about something they should feel bad about.

But what if it isn't their fault? In all likelihood, it isn't. And for those who it truly isn't, that's just too bad. This is a utilitarian analysis. Usually I'm not the one saying this, but there is a common good we're talking about, and I'm picking the world in which fewer people are worse off.

But what if the shame only makes them backslide even more? That is absurd and only highlights their immaturity. What, you eat too much because you feel bad? We call that a self-destructive behavior. The same goes for alcoholism, cutting yourself, sleeping around, or whatever other destructive behavior a person engages in when they feel bad. A mark of maturity is constructive responses to negative emotions.

Those who are immature require external stimuli, as it will not come from themselves. A person who is busy engaging in rationalization for their bad behavior isn't likely to gain the impetus for good behaviors from themselves, especially if we not only let them get away with it, but affirm them for it. Hence, the point of shame. After all, people do what they do because they like what it brings for them. If others will not make it bad for them, they will keep thinking it a good thing. [There is a point to self-destructive behavior](#), after all, and it's based on the external stimuli. As such, shame is a morally superior response, [because it won't play their game](#).

Normativity and Social Role

Monday, May 13, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/13/normativity-and-social-role/>

In a previous post, [Gender Roles and Civility](#), I make the argument that stronger social roles lend to the facilitation of civility, because the stronger and better understood a given social role, the fewer variables that need to be negotiated in order for people to enter into those particular [social interactions](#). But if you make the social roles weaker and more ambiguous, there are more variables that need to be constantly negotiated, which makes it that much more difficult for the social interaction to take place effectively.

I know that many people are going to be predisposed to disagreeing with me because they are going to read into this positive (purely scientific, value-free) analysis a normative judgment. This despite my pointing out that my analysis is carried out expressly without any particular normative intents, and I even pointed out the compatibility of my analysis with the moral judgment that certain social roles should be changed. This is because civility is not always the highest end of social interaction. My only point is that civility is given up when you invalidate a social role; this tells you nothing about whether there ought to be such a social role or how it ought to be constructed.

For that, I will also make a normative argument in favor of more traditional gender roles. However, this argument, though it operates upon the positive basis of the analysis I gave before, is an argument that makes additional statements beyond the content of that analysis. Ergo, you cannot confuse my positive (value-free, purely sociological) assertions with my normative (moral, ought-to-be) assertions.

It's stupid that I need to be so careful in delineating between the two, but well, people are stupid. I've dealt with them.

The first sign that I take to indicate there to be a normativity (i.e. right and wrong) of social roles (of which gender role is a species) is that, being a social construct, a social convention, it remains the case that certain forms of construct are more adept for achieving particular ends. It seems that those who bandy about the proposition that "Gender role is just a social construct" take it to be normatively consequent upon this positive analysis that gender roles ought to be changed, but this is, like the argument I'm making, a normative argument about how gender roles ought to be managed which goes beyond the positive analysis of gender role. So I'm really only engaging in the same kind of social upheaval by questioning the norms around us, though perhaps what I'm doing shouldn't be called "queering" but "straightening." Conservatism baptized by the fire of poststructuralism.

For the notion that constructs can be more or less adept at achieving their ends, consider houses. Houses are constructs; they don't have to be any particular way, since they are constructed in order to suit the purposes of those living in them. However, because they are meant to be lived in, they will be constructed in a certain way on the basis of how it will suit the comfort of those living in them. As such, though there is no necessity to do so, houses tend to be built with walls and a roof, the better to keep out the elements and normalize our living conditions. Then we also put windows in the walls, doors, and fill the house with furniture, in order to improve our comfort. So on and so forth. Now you will find variations in construction from culture to culture and region to region; some of these variations reflect the environment (there ain't no cabanas in Minnesota), some of these are purely cultural. Based on these, you can note how certain properties of the environment and culture can be inferred from the variation in construction. Alpine chalets and tiki huts are noticeably distinct, and with good reason, but they are both only variations on the construct of a living quarter.

As such, this seems to motivate that we should not be normatively nihilist about social constructs. We want there to be social constructs, because the ends of social interaction are generally preferable. It is due to the ends gained through social interaction that we engage in social interaction at all.

If there should be social constructs, what sorts of normative rules do we want those social constructs to follow? We certainly do not want them to be systematic infringements on people's

rights. So “x is a social construct” does not justify that social construct. We want them to be respectful of the dignity of the individual, within practical limits. As such, a social construct that required us to spend 10 minutes going through a ritualistic ceremony in order to begin any social interaction in order to “respect the individual’s dignity” would be impractical. If anything, we want certain formalities we engage in in order to achieve this end of our social interactions to be simpler and easier to complete. For instance, how we typically achieve that presently is a “How are you?” and a refraining from insults against the other’s character.

At the same time, we want the construct to be predicated on the inherent preferences under negotiation the interaction is meant to accomplish. Consider the social construct of legal proceedings. The law in question that is relevant will be brought up, the evidence which exists to implicate a party in violation of that law will be brought up, while the defending party in question must be allowed to present evidence in favor of their own innocence as well as to dispute the evidence brought up by the prosecution. These rules and others are taken to serve the legitimate interests of the parties in question in order that justice be fulfilled, the intended end of legal proceedings. The same should go for other sorts of social construct; so that the legitimate interests of the parties may be negotiated.

We might otherwise state this as saying we ought not invalidate the legitimate interests of a party. A social construct which puts what ought to be allowed as a legitimate interest of a person in a given social interaction beyond the sphere of possibility will not be a very good construct.

This would serve to legitimate the matter of saying certain constructs are preferable over others. This is what we do when we say that a legal proceeding which doesn’t include the torture of the defendant is superior to a legal proceeding which does. In one, the legitimate interests of the parties in question are invalidated, while in another, those legitimate interests are actually served.

This may be considered a proto-theory of social role normativity, and I will apply it when I consider gender roles.

Comment on May 16, 2013:

I happen to believe that, free of statist distortions, society would fall back to a more traditional model. Obviously, the model is not, and never has been, “Everyone will take the exact same path in life.” But there will be changes in demographics, different opportunities, so on and so forth. I very much favor a more traditional society, which is just another factor motivating my anarchism.

Sexism and Sexual Realism

Monday, May 13, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/13/sexism-and-sexual-realism/>

Men and women are different.

Everyone will nod their head.

This will lead to different results. Men choose to fight physically, women choose to fight socially. Men are more aggressive, women are more passive.

Everyone will still be nodding their head.

Men will earn more and reach higher positions of success.

And thus the cry of sexism is blasted.

But it's uncanny that we can accept that men and women are different, except when someone wishes those differences worked out differently. They not only have different genitalia, they have different aptitudes and attitudes due to the structure of their brain and chemistry. Why shouldn't this be an explanation for universal facts? How is it that conspiracy becomes more tenable an explanation when it's something the feminist wants to be changed by violence (legal policy)? "Men earn more because of sexist power structures!" What makes that structure sexist, rather than happening to reflect the biological and psychological reality of sex?

It is pitiable that true attempts at explaining the statistically significant differences between men and women that suggest it has to do with essential, biological differences between the two is somehow necessarily "sexist." Is it sexist to allege that men rape women more than vice versa because men are just more sexually aggressive? Is it sexist to allege that women use many more words than men because women are just more socially practicable? How can a fact be sexist? How can we ever change anything except by reference to what is actually the case?

We must be able to make a distinction between sexism and sexual realism, i.e. treating the factual differences between the sexes as having to do with factual differences in biology. When you consider that the relations between the sexes in every society have been extremely similar, it is far-fetched to argue this is due to some insidious conspiracy, which ironically depends on the supposition that men are just more socially aware in order to always take the reins over society in such a way (for if men and women were essentially the same in this regard, why couldn't the women sometimes manage to take the reins?). It is more explanatory that the differences between two groups are accounted for by differences in the properties of the members of those groups, be that the difference between ants and bees, gas and liquid, or men and women. It then cannot be sexist to posit factual explanations.

I believe sexism is a kind of ethical view, which mandates undue discrimination on the basis of sex. Granted, this is a vague definition, as it hinges on what is "undue" discrimination. I don't think many would consider it a sort of undue discrimination if I choose to kiss women and not men.

Sexual realism, on the other hand, is a merely factual view. "Men are more aggressive." The facts back me up on this. Men commit more rape, they participate in more physical violence, they are more likely to be soldiers, so on and so forth for all the activities we associate with aggression.

Facts imply ethical reactions, this is true. However, what the facts imply depends on the ethical theory. If a feminist wants to argue that women ought to be paid equally as men, she is free to do so, but it must be from an ethical basis (and this no matter what the facts are). Her ethics may require us to simply ignore facts (consider the [Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard](#);

everyone gets the same reward despite how much work they actually did), but it is also legitimate for ethics to include reference to facts (now see the [Parable of the Talents](#)). A correct ethics may even require that sometimes reward is proportionate to input, and sometimes it isn't. So for instance, the slogan "Equal pay for equal work" depends on the fact of whether the work of men and women is actually equal (though how that will be measured is difficult, and I think [only the market process can really let you know](#)).

As is only too obvious from my previous posts, I believe there are substantial differences between men and women psychologically and biologically, and this explains the differences men and women have in society. Men are more decisive and commit earlier, which leads to higher success when it occurs (due to risk/reward; earlier commitment = higher risk). Women are more satisfied with letting the world come to them, which does not lead to as high of success. Consider, who do you think is more likely the master pianist, the person who has practiced obsessively all their life or the person who has dabbled but likes to "keep their options open for other pursuits?" And if men were more likely to have a single-minded devotion to their career, while women might pass up that promotion in case she wants a family later, then it seems only obvious that men will earn more and will become the masters of business, politics, art, science, philosophy, sport, and so on. If we suppose that men are by nature more decisive and commit earlier, that will explain why men tend to rise to the greatest heights of their chosen fields.

I am not proposing any ethical views here, I am only suggesting facts to explain facts, and this on their basis of having more explanatory power. I believe it clear that psychological/biological explanations for the differences in society between men and women are more powerful than conspiracy theories about "the patriarchy."

Why is Sexual Realism Equated with Sexism?

Thursday, May 16, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/16/why-is-sexual-realism-equated-with-sexism/>

[There are numerous observations, codified in biological, psychological, sociological, and economic studies that demonstrate overwhelmingly that men and women are different by nature.](#) These observations are borne out consistently in people's experience, and they have real world implications concerning the distribution of labor and production. Feminism, predicated as it is on the notion that these differences (when they favor men in some way) are merely the result of cultural conditioning, becomes a kind of pseudo-scientific creationism when it is so blatantly contradicted by all existing science. Yet referencing these facts in order to provide explanation for observed differences routinely gets one put through the ringer of public shame and disavowal. If you defend sexual realism, you will be called a sexist. Why is truth taboo?

The reason for this is probably related to [why Richwine is being called a racist for being a racial realist](#).

The facts don't fit the imperative of feminism, and we know what will happen if people start not only believing the facts, but acting on them. Society would gradually return to a more traditional

form, with its well-defined gender roles and life paths. This cannot be allowed to happen. There are too many vested interests in the breakdown of civil society. Wherever the family fails, the government rises. When power is no longer more evenly distributed through a wider array of structures, it can be captured centrally.

I'm not suggesting this course was embarked upon consciously by any individual or group. Government isn't that smart. However, now that we are on this course, the problems will continue to be exploited and exacerbated for all they're worth.

This is where the motivation to push memetic falsities arises. To a certain degree, it's self-perpetuating, if only because every social structure includes in itself an element that seeks to preserve itself. It would be impossible to point to any one event or time at which this course was chosen, as it is the confluence of a variety of ideas and events, yet there is a clear trend one may note.

As individuals are increasingly atomized in the lack of family structures, it is only inevitable that they should look for help from the hills. And so the government, like any opportunistic sugar daddy, offered his help to the vulnerable women, [whose votes are bought so cheaply](#) and whose feelings are so easy to manipulate. As the advantages government attempts to give to women increasingly fall outside the natural scope of social structures, these gifts must themselves increasingly be made a burden on men. This social structure will not survive only as a matter of legal definitions and benefits, but requires an underlying ideology to deter anyone bringing this up.

Before I go on to provide some documentation of this trend, it is worth pointing out that not all these "advantages" are truly so. In many instances, women are actually made worse off in the long run as they form delusions about what they will be able to do with their life. So, for instance, [they don't marry](#) until ([or get divorced](#)) past the age of 30, [despite that this is well after they've peaked in value](#). Or, [more women go to college](#), but then they accrue [tens of thousands in debt](#) in [a major that won't help them earn any more](#).

[Birth control must be covered by health insurance without copay or affecting deductible](#). And discrimination by sex is illegal. This means men will pay for it. And oh yeah, [men will be paying a lot more for health insurance anyway, but that's okay, because women will pay less](#).

[Women initiate divorce 2/3 of the time](#). Yet they are most frequently awarded custody, child support, and alimony by the courts.

[Rates of premarital sex are way up](#). [Cohabitation rates are way up](#). Both correlative positively with likelihood of getting divorce later on.

That is just to point out the legal structure, without exploring the underlying ideological commitments that act to justify these things. These social phenomena are at odds with the maintenance of a cohesive civil society, in that they are contrary to the interests of all parties involved and produce a social structure that punishes excellence and rewards vice. To see this requires looking at the facts, which are that individuals prefer community and family over the reigning atomization, to have a spouse and children, to perceive a continuity of the family's legacy and its works.

What is there to be done? Hardly anything, as the decline will occur in the natural course of events. The only question is when, how, and who the biggest losers will be.

Comment on June 4, 2013:

>Case in point.

No idea what you mean.

>Point being?

I don't believe in the justice of forcing others to bear the costs of others.

>Are you saying the "more" women who go to college invariably end up in a course of "theology"?

I wouldn't know about theology, but they certainly do receive more liberal arts majors than STEM majors.

>(Not that it is much of your business).

Since I ostensibly pay taxes, what that money funds is my business.

>How about your own college degree?

What about it, exactly?

>Civil society – all parties? Hah. Go read Gramsci.

Gramsci's one of those writers I'm yet planning on reading. I'm already presently attending to at least a dozen books, so you will have to either explicate the point you intend yourself or grant that I won't be able to respond to it specifically now until much later.

>There is indeed something called sexual realism- GENDER realism, actually. "Sexual" is not synonymous to "gender"- two very different things in fact.

Could you clarify?

The Future of Marriage (or rather, not)

Thursday, May 16, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/16/the-future-of-marriage-or-rather-not/>

Suppose you're a man. Should you get married? You may want to, but what a person wants isn't necessarily what a person should do. I want to do nothing but drink all day. Should I? No. So let us ask, should a man get married? If you really considered the present realities, would you want to?

Let's take as a given that you want to marry a woman who has these traits: 1) attractive, 2) faithful, 3) companionable. I will define these as such:

Attractive: you want a woman who is concerned with how she looks and is perceived by others, so that she will do what she needs to maintain her figure. You don't want to marry a fatty, nor do

you want her to give up maintaining a figure after getting married. Likewise, you would like her to be interesting to talk to and to be around with others. She wants to do this because it is healthy and because she knows you would like it.

Faithful: she would never cheat on you or think of divorce as a live option. She is interested in making the marriage work, and will put in the work necessary to make plain what she needs and to reciprocate for what you need. She understands that marriage is not only about good feelings or good times, but is a virtue-building relationship that will have rough times. She doesn't expect you to be perfect, and recognizes that she isn't perfect either. She has mature expectations about what marriage will do for you and her. To a certain degree, she has prepared and planned for marriage.

Companionable: you will be around for a long time. You don't expect her to be your best friend; marriage is a different kind of relationship. She understands the importance you place on your work, and does what she can to support you in that regard. She will always make your relationship a priority, within reason. She also recognizes the priority of your work over hers, because we are talking about the long term, and men are just expected to work for the long term and women to look after the children. And yes, she will provide sex, even if she doesn't always want to, because remember, the man does things for her benefit even when he doesn't want to (like working 40+ hour weeks).

Now I imagine some feminist somewhere is writhing. Good. I note I've basically described the ideal wife as a responsible woman who is mature and capable of adult relationships. Feminists, who think women should have more responsibility, should be able to withstand higher expectations. It isn't as if women don't have expectations of their own. I'm simply being realistic about what men want. I imagine some lame ass from the Beta Brigade will insist that he doesn't really need that much from a wife, that it's too much to expect from a woman. Never mind that's not only a lie (he does want these things), totally beta, it also manages to be sexist. Congrats, you're a winner.

Attractive, faithful, and companionable. Super simple stuff. Now let us survey the landscape, to see where things have come, where they are, and where they're going.

Let us deal with the issue of attraction. I will postulate only a few simple truths about what men find attractive. Remember, attraction is a function of health. We perceive what we do as beautiful and attractive because it correlates to health. This is not only physiological health, but psychological health as well, since the extra effort it takes to maintain a healthy body has spillover effects in psychological constitution.

Women are less attractive today than they used to be. We may have at our hands more procedures and beautifying products than ever before, but none of these things cover up the fact that women are more likely to be overweight than ever before, and they also dress much less feminine than before. Not only that, but women are more likely than ever to come up with excuses and rationalizations as to why they cannot (will not) do anything to make themselves more attractive. She doesn't have the time to eat healthy, her birth control makes her hungrier/less able to count calories/less able to feel full/retain more weight, she can't find time to go the gym, she's too busy pursuing an education/career, those 1000 calorie \$5 frou-frou drinks from Starbucks are just so necessary to her high octane lifestyle, dammit! In other words, she'll spend more time coming up with reasons as to why she can't/shouldn't be expected to try and look pretty. Hence [fat acceptance](#).

So already, the pool of select women has shrunk significantly. And she won't even think about getting married until well after her peak of attractiveness is past. Either you can learn to live with chubby, or you can go to Eastern Europe. [Fact: it's harder for men to get it up for fatties](#).

Okay, fine, so beauty is only skin deep. After all, women who aren't naturally attractive have more incentive to develop interesting personalities, right? Now, your experience may differ on this account, but like I cited above, women who are willing to do more to upkeep their looks also tend to do more to upkeep their personalities. Yes, they are beautiful and shallow girls, but deeper girls better understand that looks are important to themselves and others in the first place.

And the pool of select women shrinks some more.

Let us suppose you want a faithful and companionable women. This one is pretty damn important, and I'm rolling the analysis of these two together. There is no way getting around it, and only the greatest of fools would insist that the expectation of fidelity is too much for a man to have about a woman. Anybody who cheats is a bad person, and you should not trust them with anything so important as emotional dependency. If you cannot really trust your wife, cannot really have some kind of emotional dependency, you cannot develop a healthy and rich marital relationship. Your relationship will be kneecapped, and this will also hinder your own personal development.

Furthermore, you want her to be willing to work it out, to be realistic about the inevitability of rough patches, so on and so forth. You don't want her to ever think of divorce as a live option for dealing with the difficulties of marriage/life/her emotions/whatever excuse she'll have.

Yet women presently initiate 2/3 of divorce, and are more likely than before to cheat on their husbands. There exists an entire industry of divorce fantasy; an entire industry devoted to helping women wring as much out of their ex-husbands as possible; an entire legal system expressly dedicated to this endeavor; and even if she cheated, she'll still get the house and kids and half of your paycheck.

With incentives like that working against you, how can you trust a woman? How can you know that the girl who tells you she loves you isn't, well, fickle? You can hardly expect a woman to be upfront about her entertaining the decision to leave you, never mind the solemn oath of marriage (which nobody believes in anymore).

So you'll just have to be careful about which girl you choose. This means avoiding those girls who display attributes and have properties that correlate most highly with divorce. This means you should avoid girls who have had multiple past sexual partners, girls whose parents are divorced, girls with previous children and/or marriages, girls who have cheated on boyfriends/fiancees, girls who like to read bilge like Eat Pray Love. Wait, that includes at least 75% of women.

The pool of select women that are really worth marrying is awfully small, all things considered. You can play that game and hope you luck out, but that's exactly what it will be: lucking out.

And honestly, why get married? If you want sex, women are more willing than ever to put out. You have to give up the dream of marriage, having a deep and fulfilling relationship with another person, bonded over a lifetime and the experience of raising children.

These things given, this is why I say marriage is an outmoded social function. Marriage poses, for most men, a risk far greater than the benefits. [Already we are seeing men respond to these signals as they look about the rubble](#). Rates of cohabitation are up. [Rates of people never getting married are up](#). Out of wedlock birth rates and [rates of single motherhood are up](#). Divorce rates have leveled out, though its easy to see they've leveled out only because more people just aren't getting married in the first place. [Household earnings have stagnated](#) even while more women enter the workforce.

At best, couples in the last 40 years have chosen to get married out of sheer cultural inertia. It is clearer now more than ever before that marriage is for fools.

Comment on May 17, 2013:

It's an analysis of the present state of things. I'm not condoning it. In fact, it is deeply regrettable.

Socialism Cannot Coordinate for Shit

Friday, May 17, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/17/socialism-cannot-coordinate-for-shit/>

That pun just couldn't go without being used. [Venezuela runs out of toilet paper](#). [h/t Tyler](#)

Theory-Ladenness and the Everyday

Saturday, May 18, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/18/theory-ladenness-and-the-everyday/>

The majority of observations within a scientific context are theory-laden. What this means is that the given observation is meaningless apart from the theory that instructs us as to how the image, data, picture, reading, etc should be interpreted to mean. Suppose I had a machine where I asked you to take readings off of some meter. What do those readings mean? What those readings mean depends on the theory of how the machine assists in the construction of observations. Without understanding that theory, you do not really understand what the readings mean. Likewise, you can see the theory-ladenness of microscope images. The idea of a microscope is that you are looking at a light image of some object, magnified by so many times. Apart from a theory of how light transmits images, it would be difficult to understand the meaning of a microscope image.

If we must assume some given theory in order to make sense of some observation, a problem arises when there is no way to point to a theory-neutral observation which motivates our using of some particular theory within that context. Without that theory-neutral given, there's nothing definite to place our theory on. As such, while we may have observations meaningfully defined by given theories, when you have no way to rationally choose between competing theories, you can't be sure what you're measuring.

This has immense consequences for everyday social interaction. There are certain assumed theories that guide our interactions with others. For instance, we typically assume that people say what they mean, unless they meet some criteria that indicates they are saying otherwise. If we perceive someone's motivation to lie, we are less trusting of what they say, but that depends on our theorizing of the gain from lying as something that person desires. We also usually assume people are acting for something they consciously recognize themselves as desiring.

The problem is that these are assumptions, and we are generally powerless to verify them.

Suppose I believed that people generally acted on ulterior motives that even they don't understand in themselves, and that this ruled their interactions with significant others. What observation would disprove that? Most people would probably be uncomfortable with this sort of theory, as it would imply that even they don't really understand themselves, and that many actions they choose are chosen for reasons other than their believing it will get them what they want. Some part of them may want what comes of that action, but they aren't aware of that part within themselves. As such, asking someone why they're doing what they're doing, even if we suppose they were being honest, can't help. Even inner reflection is unhelpful.

This theory, which I'm basing off of [transactional analysis](#), and its most obvious opposite, cannot be chosen between on the basis of observations. Human motivation is a black box.

However, which theory you subscribe to will tend to change the way you interact with people. If you're always on the lookout for the ["Yes, but..." game](#) when someone asks for advice, you're going to be more apt to just stop giving advice after a certain point. But if you don't recognize that, and are apt to think that people's further qualifications of their problems are genuine, you'll get sucked in.

This is only an example. There are a number of other theories that define our social interactions. Suppose you're led to believe that persistence will pay off. When someone says no, you just need to change your strategy and persist. Sometimes that pays off, but obviously sometimes it doesn't. Knowing when persistence will be rewarding is a matter of modeling the other person's reason for saying "no." (The ambiguities in this paragraph are purposeful, because that's the way life is.)

We are apt to interpret phenomena in a meaningful way, and doing so requires a theory. When the theory can't be neutrally chosen, you're bound to have misunderstandings. Sometimes these misunderstandings can be cleared, and usually they aren't serious, but there are times when those misunderstandings will break social interactions and leave the participants worse off.

Contrasting Idealism to Realism: Sense

Monday, March 20, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/20/contrasting-idealism-to-realism-sense/>

I am at least a transcendental idealist. I believe there is a world out there, but that it is only accessible through our intuitions, and these intuitions being intrinsic to our mind, it follows that the reality we know of is mentally constructed. Not that there is no reality, only that when we are

speaking of the world we know by our senses, we are speaking about the combination of the world and our way of sensing it. Idealism postulates that we say the world is spatial because we perceive space. Realism, on the other hand, postulates that the way we perceive the world is as it is; I perceive space because the world is spatial. The same sort of contrast holds for all our perceptions of the world. Time as a sequence of events, color, scent, and so on are constructed; these perceptions come from the head.

Here is a question posed to me by an engineer which actually served to illuminate an idealistic perspective she didn't know she held. She asked "If there were a red poker chip, but it was placed in a box where there was no light, is it still red?" This is a variation on the trite "If a tree falls in the forest..." question. The typical way of answering is to distinguish between the sensation and the objective material presence that sensation is correlated to. But there is a contrast between idealism and realism contingent in the way of answering, which is why I was careful to note that the sensation and the material presence are correlated.

Realism would say that the material presence transmits the sensation. The senses are out there in the world; we see the poker chip as red because it bears the property of being red of itself.

Idealism would say that the sensation is the mind's interpretation of the material presence. The senses are in the mind; the poker chip's redness is constructed by the mind as an analogue to its objective material presence.

Now I may make note of something. I am here yet not contrasting realism with an absolute idealism, but only a transcendental idealism, which is a kind of halfway. Like I said above, the world is out there and it is objectively real of itself, only that our perception thereof is constructed by the mind. I would guess that many are implicitly committed to transcendental idealism, especially where you have those who want to note that our sensations of the world and the material presences those sensations are correlated to are contributed by the mind. The senses don't exist out there, but are in the head. They would state something like this to explain why science can study the objective material presence, but not our senses. You can measure the length of light, but color is our way of interpreting the length of light.

But this way of distinguishing between material presence and sensation also implicitly leads to a substance dualism. If sensation is not of the same kind as material presence, then it must be something else. Ergo, substance dualism. This is how mind is ushered into the world by those who want to maintain that material presence is the fundamental kind of presence. Materialism leads to transcendental idealism leads to substance dualism, at least as it is run by these people. Hume leads to Kant leads back to Descartes.

Yet this is fraught with problems. How can materialism lead to substance dualism, when its supposed to be contrary? I think it has to do with the kind of bowdlerized idealization which takes place in the hands of naive materialists. Where they may suppose that the world is colored only because we perceive color, they tend to want to maintain at the same time that we perceive space because the world is spatial. In other words, they pick color as an intuition intrinsic the mind, but the sensation of space is transmitted by the world's space. But if color is ideal and space is real, why does not the mind supply both senses or why does not the world transmit both senses? This halfway idealization is obscure. It is simpler to let all senses be transmitted by matter, or to let all senses be in the mind. If you have both ideal senses and real senses, you have two things to explain; it would be like waxing and shaving. Why both when one is sufficient?

The problem seems to be that, unless one maintains that material presence transmits sense, then matter is nothing we know of, as Kant admits of his thorough-going transcendental idealism. If matter is nothing we know of, we cannot mean anything about it; and thus the material falls out of our grasp. If it doesn't transmit itself to our mind, then matter is likewise only a construct of the mind. As such, while it may at times be convenient to admit of some mental construction of reality when it is clear that science won't get at it (e.g. the sensation of color), when we can get away with it in a way that doesn't seem to commit obvious problems (e.g. the sensation of space), we will. It is naive, but that is likely the way people are implicitly reasoning. But this is easy to disturb: if a cube occupies space, but it isn't seen by anyone to do so, does it still occupy space?

We must be monistic (singular) about the origin of senses. This leaves us with four metaphysical options. The first three are monistic in ontology, i.e. in terms of what fundamentally existing things it postulates to exist. These are materialism, absolute idealism, and neutral monism.

Materialism says that everything real is material presence; everything real can be cashed out in terms of material presence (whatever that is).

Absolute idealism says that everything real is mental presence; everything real can be cashed out in terms of mental presence (whatever that is).

Neutral monism says that everything real is a neutral presence (whatever that is), of which the material and the mental are variations on.

The last option is substance dualism. It postulates the fundamental existence of matter and mind, which have distinct properties in virtue of being distinct kinds of substance. Everything real can be cashed out in terms of material or mental presence (whatever those are).

The Correlation of Disorders and Heteronormativity

Monday, March 20, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/20/the-correlation-of-disorders-and-heteronormativity/>

It is a kind of irony about the world that being sick makes one more likely to get sick. When you're sick, you have a weakened immune system, you're less able to take care of yourself and thus take preventive steps against getting sick, so on and so forth. A biological disorder, i.e. a kind of sickness, increases your chances of being sick in other (biological) ways. I'm using "disorder" to simply mean "out of order," i.e. not according to its normative operation. An eye that is blind is materially disordered. We can say, with this understanding, that disorder breeds disorder.

By "disordered" here I do not mean any ethical judgments. "Normative" is in the material sense, i.e. when it doesn't work according to function. This is not to say that uses for a thing beyond its function must be disordered, but that when a thing is specifically incapable of or specifically impeded from achieving the end of its function, you have material disorder.

Here's an example for contrast, and I hope it makes it clear how material disorder can not necessarily lead to ethical disorder. Cutting off all one's hair does not constitute any material disorder. On the other hand, being unable to grow hair does constitute a material disorder. The body normally grows hair; when it no longer can, it is disordered. Note not only that disordered here does not constitute ethical disorder, but that even sharing appearance (e.g. shaving all your hair off) does not constitute disorder. The question of order is not of participating in baldness, but whether the body can grow hair.

A further note. Ethical theories can take into account material normativity, but they don't need to be based on material normativity or even cleave to material normativity at every instance. I'll leave it up to the particular ethical theories to explain how they might distinguish between "material normativity that grounds ethical normativity" and "material normativity that doesn't ground ethical normativity." Perhaps I will come around to that, but for now I am interested in asking a question about material normativity.

Consider heteronormativity. I can distinguish between two senses here, as I have previously distinguished between two senses of normativity per se. There can be material heteronormativity, having to do with the objective function of sexuality in its heterosexual end, and there can be ethical heteronormativity, having to do with the ethical preferability of heterosexuality over other forms of sexuality. Heteronormativity has to do with the psychological constitution of individuals. Ergo, actual practice is beyond the scope of material heteronormativity. To say that humans are materially heteronormative is to say that an individual is "psychologically ordered in the case that he has desire for sexual union with the opposite sex." The desire for sexual union with the same sex, or the lack of any desire for sexual union, would constitute disorder, if material heteronormativity is the case. By "homosexuality" I here mean just "desire for sexual union with the same sex." If I mean actual practice, I will call it "homosexual behavior" or something similar as a contrast to mere desiring.

As my analysis here proceeds, neither material or ethical heteronormativity presupposes the other. Ergo, one could licitly and validly say "Humans are materially heteronormative but they are not ethically heteronormative" or even "Humans are not materially heteronormative but they are ethically heteronormative." I imagine, however, most would like to argue for biconditionality, i.e. "Humans are both materially heteronormative and ethically heteronormative" or "Humans are neither materially heteronormative or ethically heteronormative." I'm not taking a position either way, yet.

The only question I am here concerned with analyzing is whether humans are materially heteronormative. I believe the answer is, quite simply, yes. I will propose an argument meant to establish such, rooted in biology, and then I will show how this explains a key phenomena regarding the correlation between individuals with same sex attraction and other forms of psychological disorder.

The end of sexuality, i.e. sexual desire and orientation, is in sexual intercourse with individuals of the opposite sex. The purpose of sexes is due to its facilitation of procreation, and apart from this purpose, there would not be sexes. We would not be male and female without some evolutionary reason, and that reason is for procreation. As procreation is the end of sexual union, and sexuality has the end of sexual union, it follows that the only purpose of sexuality is in procreation. That is to say, sexuality is materially ordered towards procreation. This requires that sexual union occur between individuals of different sex. As such, whatever deviates from this material order constitutes a disorder.

To say that sexuality has its material end in procreation, then, is to propose material heteronormativity.

If I may make a contrasting argument in the same form for purposes of illustration. We recognize that a desire to kill oneself constitutes a psychological disorder because we are objectively ordered towards desiring life. We are ordered towards life because it is beneficial to the (material) biological good of the individual and the society. The desire of things has its material end in living.

And to propose that desire has its material end in living, then, is to say that humans are materially bionormative.

These two arguments, one which establishes that the desire to kill oneself is disordered and the other which establishes that the desire of sexual union with the same sex is disordered are of the same substantial form. That is, you could not argue against the validity and soundness of one of the arguments without thereby arguing against the validity and soundness of the other. What counts as establishing disorder in one counts as establishing disorder in the other.

Obviously, I have a good reason for doing so. I understand most are disinclined to even suggesting that homosexual desire is even materially disordered, but this is at variance with the inclination to regard suicidal desire as materially disordered. And remember, what ethical implications you get out of this are based on your ethical system, and I have not (yet) proposed any.

If humans are materially heteronormative, this provides an excellent explanation of [the high correlation between homosexuality and other psychological, social, and behavioral disorders](#). (Further corroboration [Neutral Source](#), [Pro-Gay Source](#).) Now the usual explanation given by pro-gay individuals is that this is due to the social stigma faced by homosexuals in our culture, but this alternate explanation I propose is stronger for a simple reason: homosexuals have over the last few decades faced substantially less stigma from society, yet the rates of disorder have remained just as high. As my explanation is internal, i.e. having to do with the objective disorder in the individual, rather than external, i.e. coming from society, this would also explain why rates of illness have remained at the same level.

As to ethical heteronormativity, any discussion on that will have to come later.

The Grey Territory of Consent

Wednesday, May 22, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/22/the-grey-territory-of-consent/>

Life is complicated, a string of events too complicated to ever adequately explain. Simple explanations exist only in children's stories. Real life has very few perfectly blameless victims or perfectly evil villains. Acknowledging the messiness of events is, however, [taboo whenever it amounts to an admittance](#) of something like [sexual realism](#). You can't suggest that women are responsible for themselves (except when it makes them look good)(and you can't acknowledge this either). You'll brush up against [the feminine imperative](#) when you do so. Yes, in case it wasn't obvious, we're talking about sexual assault, and we're going to actually attempt to talk about it in a way that goes beyond empty platitudes or meaningless factoids.

Considering the vast bevy of data sets concerning sexual assault and rape (one source I could find says a rape occurs every 2 minutes in the US; another says every 7), it is hard to point to any data to get a grounding for the phenomena in order to stake claims on what is “usually the case” or “only the case exceptionally,” although I’m willing to work with a few data-backed claims on the basis of examining the meaning of those claims. I don’t mean to talk just about rape (forcible sexual penetration) but sexual assault in general (unwanted sexual contact). But in order to get around to doing so, something right away has to be acknowledged.

“Unwanted sexual contact” is awfully broad, and includes everything from prolonged and persistent groping to an uninvited peck on the cheek. “Sexual assault,” being a highly charged term, can at times connote a more serious charge than is actually the case. The bar is very low for what constitutes sexual assault. This is part of the problem when discussing what constitutes sexual assault. We can’t do without this sort of definition (we could provide a scale, but we still want to consider the phenomena of “unwanted sexual contact” as a whole, so providing a scale isn’t the point here), but it does make the whole issue a lot murkier. “Sexual assault is really bad” isn’t really the case. It can be really bad; but it isn’t always. For the dullards who require me to spell this out again, it is obviously quite a bad thing when a girl repeatedly tells a man to stop, but he continues to feel her up as he wishes. That is very bad. However, a man who risks giving a girl a kiss when she doesn’t explicitly give permission (the majority of first kisses, I reckon), to find out that it wasn’t desired, may at worst have committed a faux pas, hardly a grave offense.

The psychology behind sexual interaction must be taken into account, and because social psychology is complex, the explanation of what occurred is complicated. Humans at once desire spontaneity, or at least think they desire spontaneity (as romance in fiction appears to indicate), but spontaneity does not include explicit accounts of what is agreed as to what shall occur. Communication is not only difficult, it tends to be refrained from in these situations. It may not be a bad thing to bring more explicit agreement as to the bounds of a particular tryst, but then this may be working against human psychology.

This aspect of the problem may lie more with women. Most men are straightforward and willing to plow through logistics in order to get at the goal. When a man wants to get his rocks off, he opens up a web browser and searches for boobs. Women, on the other hand, are much subtler, and prefer a complicated interplay of expectations, setting, and subcommunication. When a woman wants to get her rocks off, she buys a romance novel. She’s much less goal-oriented than the man, and so working through technicalities not only puts off the goal, it is in stark contrast to what’s looking for. Having it all work out “magically” is the point, and logistics(i.e. explicit consent) are anything but.

Men, obviously, being goal-oriented, take this in stride, and operate on the basis of “escalate until she explicitly makes things stop.” So the man is ever-exploring, pushing up against new territory, looking to go as far as the line. This can put women in an awkward situation. What if the man is obviously much stronger, and she is afraid that, after a certain point in the tryst, he would not tolerate being made to stop? So she’ll continue with things, even after the line has crossed.

Does it constitute sexual assault? Technically, as it is unwanted sexual contact, yes. But can the man be blamed? No. If she’s giving no signs of discomfort and reciprocates all escalation, that is all the signs a person can realistically use to evaluate her consent.

Can it be argued that men are somehow supposed to just “magically” know? I don’t think so. After all, this would make the woman’s consent the man’s responsibility to decide. Clearly all parties are responsible for measuring consent in the other, but no party is responsible for deciding the others’ consent. To demand that men magically know this is to suppose that women are incapable of knowing and thus not responsible for themselves, which I think is silly. (But note that, if women are responsible for themselves, they are responsible for the situations they put themselves in. See right below.)

Consider, furthermore, the circumstances under which most trysts are initiated.

Suppose the man and the woman go out to a fine restaurant, then the woman comes over to his house “for drinks.” Most tend to understand that it isn’t about the drinks, even if drinks are poured. The point of the woman coming over for drinks is in order to initiate romantic engagement. So if the woman goes along with this, even though she actually has no romantic feelings or intent, is it sexual assault when the man kisses her without explicitly asking her permission beforehand? It seems that, because this is a popular cultural script, she’s essentially giving implied consent, even if she doesn’t mean to.

That is an innocuous script. Consider a more serious script. Two students, male and female, under the influence of alcohol, meet at a party. They hit it off, and head upstairs to initiate and complete a romantic engagement. As they are both under the influence, neither is technically capable of giving consent, and so they proceed to sexually assault each other. Yet many women go to parties and get drunk with the express intent of such a one night stand (I hardly need to mention that this is the intent of practically every man).

This analysis, I believe, outlines some initial problems with producing simple narratives about sexual assault and rape. Consent tends to take place in a grey territory. So, while this analysis be anything but straightforward and sexy, it seems that to actually get at the issues of “rape culture” or notions like “rape is a woman’s problem,” we must place the entire sexual context within [social roles](#) and [the ways people interact with each other](#). These problems have no single solution, if there even is a feasible one.

The Economy is a Simulacrum

Thursday, May 23, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/23/the-economy-is-a-simulacrum/>

Every intervention by a non-market force, i.e. government, produces distortions which must, in the long run, be corrected, as they come to grips with the actual preferences of actors within the economy. So long as the economy is placed beyond the control of people’s actual preferences, the economy fails to indicate what people actually prefer, and you cannot tell whether or not people are obtaining what they prefer. Now, someone will inevitably tell me that people’s preferences aren’t everything; I know, so keep it. The obtaining of people’s preferences are important not because preferences are everything, but because the vast, overwhelming majority of those preferences are in line with inducing welfare; the closer we move to satisfying more people’s desires, the less hunger, war, and strife there would be in the world, because people who desire peace and cooperation vastly outnumber those who seek after violence and promulgate it for itself. Ergo, it follows that the more we allow people to seek after their preferences without obstruction, the more likely we are to come to a better world.

This is why it is important to notice and understand the distortions in the economy. Every distortion is effective in the short-run; it will, at least for a while, produce a change in some measure of the economy (e.g. GDP), but as the preferences of the market are the only thing which really matters for the distribution of resources, the distortion will be corrected so that resources try to get back to where they are most preferred. That is how the market works. You cannot distort your way to welfare; you cannot legislate prosperity; you cannot coerce people to happiness.

The economy is a simulacrum. A simulacrum is defined as “the truth which overs up that there is none.” [This is a definition which applies most clearly to politics](#). To be a simulacrum is for the unreality to be itself a reality; we are simulating when, at work with nothing to do, one works to make work. Another simulation is the scandal of Kermit Gosnell; it was no surprise that he was killing babies, but we must act like it was. We simulate scandal in politics at every turn, since the unscrupulousness of politics is the entire point; finding out that a politician is a scumbag willing to line his pockets at the expense of the innocents is a surprise only to the most idiotic.

[What we use to measure the health of the economy, being so effectively separated from the actual preferences of people in society, no longer matters](#). We measure GDP, but it no longer tells us whether people are obtaining their preferences. We measure unemployment, but it no longer tells us whether people are being productive in obtaining their preferences. We watch the Dow and the S&P, [but they no longer reflect the expectations of investors](#). We look at the prices of homes, but they have nothing to do with people trying to live somewhere. [We bicker about the lower zero bound](#), but it has nothing to do with [people's actual liquidity preferences](#).

[Tyler Durden of Zero Hedge](#) is known to say that the stock market is disconnected from reality; it would be more apt to say that [the economy is a hyperreality](#). What is important is no longer whether people are obtaining their preferences, but that these indirect measures are maximized in value by any means, even though doing so completely negates their effectiveness as a measure of the obtaining of preferences. So what if college degrees are useless scraps of paper? More people than ever are getting college degrees! (Fun fact: the USSR had more PhD's per capita than the USA.) So what if most individuals and households are insolvent? Interest rates for everything are lower than ever before! So what if you've lost your job and can't find new (productive) work? Some banks didn't go bust! So what if we must handicap the young and make them pay for the Social Security of the elderly? The Baby Boomers are retiring after having accumulated a lifetime of savings and will be wealthier now more than ever! On and on, examples multiply.

We are at a point where the political elite are intent on maximizing indirect measures of the economy. We will go to war, but that is alright, because GDP will rise as a result! The inevitable corrections can be delayed by increasingly heavy-handed and transparently impractical policies, leading from nudges to shoves to whole systems intended to blow things up; but as even policy faces diminishing marginal returns, more drastic actions consequently have lesser distortionary impact. As such, the distortions must either be allowed to correct, leading to recession and downturn, or ramped up, being followed by total collapse. This is the problem with simulating the economy, instead of letting it work itself out.

The economy may be a simulacrum, but the reality broils underneath.

A Theory of Material Normativity

Sunday, May 26, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/26/a-theory-of-material-normativity/>

In my post [The Correlation of Disorders and Heteronormativity](#), I defined material disorder as “when a thing is specifically incapable of or specifically impeded from achieving the end of its function.” I want to expand further on this, in order to produce an account of material normativity. Using this, I want to look at the frustration of material order in the human person (e.g. biologically, psychologically, etc) as it has occurred over the last century in order to explain the ongoing decline of Western civilization and the progressivist confusion over what constitutes the good of society. It is a purely descriptive account, though it would have great prescriptive power in the hands of any conservative neoreactionary, such as myself.

A thing achieves material normativity in the case that the potential of its intended function is preserved. To put this more simply, when there is an object (be that a whole or just a part of that whole) that exists in order to produce some particular effect/s, and would not exist except for this, so long as the potential for this effect to take place exists, then the object is in order. Whenever it is the case that the object is somehow perturbed such that the effects deviate, it is materially disordered.

This is a definition which people implicitly accept, especially in the realm of biological and psychological health, so I only need to use a few examples to show how you already use this sort of account, albeit without such a specific definition in mind.

Consider the heart. We distinguish between a “healthy” and an “unhealthy” heart. What is the standard by which we do so? We do so by determining its intended function, i.e. to pump blood throughout the body. When it is “all in order,” we say that it is healthy; we might say that it falls in line with cardiovascular logic. However, when a heart somehow is not in line with cardiovascular logic, e.g. a person suffers from [aortic stenosis](#) or [arrhythmia](#), we say it is “out of order,” or unhealthy. “Healthy” and “unhealthy” just mean the same thing, concerning biology, as material order and material disorder.

The same notion of material order applies to the mind, and it is how we discern mental health. We recognize a certain kind of functioning of the psyche as following psychiatric logic. A deviation from this, say, a desire to harm oneself, constitutes mental disorder.

That there is such a thing as material normativity, I believe, is widely accepted. What is controversial is the diagnosis of certain widely accepted traits as constituting instances of material disorder. For instance, there is my conclusion, argued for in the first linked post of mine above, that humans are materially heteronormative, and that as such sexual attraction to the same sex constitutes a material disorder. What we should desire is a method for determining a thing’s intended function. Apart from this, how could we diagnose something as either ordered or disordered? In other words, how do we tell what a thing’s order is constituted, in order to know when it is disordered?

A key notion here is the question of why there is such an object in the first place. If there is no end fulfilled in the individual by the object, then it is extraneous, and can be neither ordered nor disordered in the intrinsic, organic sense sought out here. However, when it is the case that some part of a being is supplied in the process of its generation, we must suppose there is some end fulfilled by that object for the individual; if it did not fulfill some end for the individual,

why should it be ordinarily supplied? As such, when we find something that is ordinarily supplied in the process of a thing's generation, we have prima facie evidence in favor of that object's having some intended function.

Past that point, we need only examine what role it fills within the good of the individual as a whole. For certain body parts it is very easy; this is a heart, it pumps blood, these are lungs, they oxygenate blood, this is the kidney, it purifies blood, etc etc. Some body parts have multiple functions or very general functions; for instance, feet are for walking as well as standing, and hands are for holding and grasping things for a nigh infinite amount of purposes.

The body is, however, not so interesting, since most are not interested in denying the intended function of body parts. Even now they still teach the penis and vagina as fulfilling specifically sexual functions in university anatomy classes, so the forces of progressivism have not gone so far as their logic seems to demand.

What is interesting, rather, are inclinations and desires of the mind. Generally, we might define progressivism as the defense and exaltation of all felt inclinations (except when that inclination is worshipping God) and a right to the freedom from the consequences of such inclinations when acted upon. As such, a robust account of material normativity like my own, since it will naturally dictate that not all felt inclinations are ordered, is a good place to begin the examination and critique of progressivism in the West.

The application of my theory of material normativity has already been applied to homosexuality, rendering the verdict that sexual attraction towards the same sex is materially disordered. Remember that this is not an ethical normativity; the ethical application of material normativity is beyond the scope of the present analysis, though I will not deny the potential and my own wish to develop an argument along these lines. What I am interested here in is describing how progressivism in the West has caused a proliferation of mental disorder. To some extent, this rests within the notion that no one is perfect, but the thesis this account could defend is that disorder in individuals has increased due to progressivism.

Furthermore, I hope that this theory can be combined with some things I have said about [social constructs](#) and [social interaction](#) in order to produce an account of material normativity of social institutions, so that I can say things not only about, say, the conceptual confusions concerning sexuality in the individual, but conceptual confusions concerning relationships, [marriage](#), family, [the market](#), and so on.

Disambiguating Ethical and Material Normativity

Sunday, May 26, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/26/disambiguating-ethical-and-material-normativity/>

I'm going to go ahead and make this post immediately on the heels of my [Theory of Material Normativity](#) for a simple reason; due to a lack of conceptual subtlety on the part of those I take to disagree with me, there will be a tendency to see me as saying something I'm not. Ergo my attempt at disambiguation, showing where the ethical and material differ.

It seems overtly likely by people to see the proposition that “Homosexual desire is *materially* disordered” as meaning, or at least necessarily implying, that “Homosexual desire is *ethically* disordered.” The confusion is easy to understand, mostly because nobody cares to approach the world with a distinction between the descriptive and the prescriptive. However, the confusion is still elementary. “The purpose of x is y” is significantly distinct from “x ought to y.”

What I am saying, in other words, is that my theory of material normativity is not sufficient for producing ethical propositions. Now, combined with an ethical theory, it could certainly do that, but it must be emphasized that it is ethical theories which produce ethical propositions out of facts. Descriptive facts, of themselves, entail nothing. “That child is starving,” as a bare fact of itself, does not imply “Someone ought to feed that child.” That is the purpose of an ethical theory, not a kind of factual theory. On the other hand, it is worth nothing “Someone ought to feed that child” does still depend in part on the fact that “That child is starving” (at least in most ethical theories).

As such, the move from instances of material normativity to ethical normativity depends on an ethical theory. A person could conceptually develop an ethical theory that produces no propositions dependent on certain instances of material normativity. Contrariwise, someone could be interested in developing just such a kind of ethical system, as I am.

Apart from ethics, what does material normativity provide us? One of my purposes is as a matter of examination and critique of Western civilization, particularly insofar as it declines under the umbrage of progressivism. Ergo, a (kind of) progressivist could accept my account of material normativity, and even use it to diagnose and examine certain aspects of present culture, without accepting certain ethical conclusions that might be entailed by other ethical theories.

Now, this is certainly very dangerous territory for the progressivist, as it is intuitive that ethical normativity is very near to material normativity. After all, our typical account of the problem of self-harm relies, at least implicitly, on the kind of accounting my theory provides.

This renders my prediction that most progressivists will utilize this sort of reasoning concerning my account:

- 1) *material normativity implies ethical normativity*
- 2) *but homosexuality isn't disordered!*
- 3) *therefore, the theory of material normativity must be incorrect*

This is, in one way, a weakness and a strength of my account. It is a weakness in that it will get it unduly rejected, simply because it seems (perhaps accurately) to entail that certain progressive sacred cows are ethically disordered. It is a strength precisely for that reason, in that it provides very strong rational backing to ethical conclusions the progressivist disdains. Suddenly, it would be very easy to understand the claim that homosexuality is unnatural, disordered, and ethically deleterious. Progressivists, recognizing just how easy it is to perceive such a line of reasoning, must engage in their trademark doublethink to get past this. After all, the last thing they can do is admit that opposition to homosexuality is ever rational, because then you couldn't get away with calling them names.

Changing and Unchanging Being

Monday, May 27, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/27/changing-and-unchanging-being/>

There is a way we speak of things that relies on negation. To rely on negation is, in other words, to take some positive quality which might otherwise be stipulated, and to declare it to be not in this case. However, to do so requires that, of this, there remains something positively the case, for if there were nothing positively the case, there would just be nothing that is the case. As such, no negation can be complete and still mean something.

Now consider the notion of change. We may say of a being that it is “changing,” and it does not seem that we are stating something tautological, i.e. that *to be* is *to be changing*. But if this is the case, and changing is an inessential property of being-qua-being, then the notion of unchanging being has some credence. That is to say, we can still mean something positive of a being while maintaining that it does not undergo change. In other words, we do not need to mean by “a being” that it changes, and if a being can be a being without undergoing change, then it follows that changeless being is possible, and a being that undergoes change must be considered to possess some additional property.

If a changeless being is possible, then we must suppose that atemporal existence is possible, as time is just the undergoing of change in a being (at least in my view). It would follow then that beings can possibly exist which are not material, for to be material is to be undergoing change. Immaterial beings are possible.

It may seem a weak thesis to only demonstrate that immaterial, changeless beings are possible, but this serves of itself to demonstrate the falsity of materialism, as materialism maintains that all possibly existing things must be material. If we are past materialism, this opens up our metaphysics to idealism, dualism, theism, and so on.

Theory and Rhetoric: The Transmission of Academia to Society

Monday, May 27, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/27/theory-and-rhetoric-the-transmission-of-academia-to-society/>

I have long believed in a notion concerning the impact of academic ideas on society. The ideas of academia eventually filter down to society, and typically those ideas which capture academia go on to capture society several decades later. The frontier of academic research, supposing it has any ostensible relevance to society (say, sociopolitical thought, e.g. Rousseau), is at the time of its writing typically well beyond the patience or capabilities of society at large, though if it influences academia, it will influence what academia teaches to the world, and in doing so, influences what will eventually be accepted by society.

This transmission of ideas from academia can be traced for the kinds of feminism: at first you had the academic feminism of Mill et al. which led to women's suffrage, then you had the next wave of academic feminism in de Beauvoir which led to sexual liberation in the 60's, then you had the academic of Butler, which is now leading to the subversion of gender and sexuality. Likewise can you trace the mechanical worldview of Descartes through to Newton, or [the](#)

[metaphysically positivist view from Wittgenstein through the Vienna Circle through Sagan through Dawkins through your usual cohort of New Atheists.](#)

So we might summarize this as saying “Whoever wins academia wins society 50 years on.” Of course, 50 years is a rough average; some disciplines lend themselves to quicker appropriation by society, and some ideas are more difficult to integrate. For instance, we can notice the Hegelian notion of the state dominating present politics, but only in the broadest sense, and the other loci of his theory are at best apprehended in the influence of others. Likewise, I doubt Heidegger will ever become integrated simply because his views are extremely difficult to comprehend and live for academic philosophers.

The transmission of academic ideas to social ideas goes along the same path of haute couture; you can look it up, but the high concept only tends to be received in society in a diminished form. You see this in the haute universitaire of Wittgenstein. The purpose of his *Tractatus* was never transmitted to society; all that was received were some notions concerning the meaningfulness of sentences, so that you have in some way the gist of part of what he was saying, but not the form. The necessity of quietude forgotten, the absolution of (non-scientific) metaphysics received.

There is a role played by different kinds of actors, which is the notion of theory and rhetoric I want to develop. Some individuals are pure theorists; they are less intent on persuading society at large (at least, by their own efforts) than they are with formulating a comprehensive and satisfying philosophical system. On the other hand, you have individuals who are pure rhetoricians; they do not spend their time building systems, but are the recipients of knowledge systems, and transmit these ideas to society with the sole purpose of persuasion, adopting rhetoric as needed and thus losing some theoretical clarity with the aim of attaining mass appeal.

These are not neat divisions, but a continuum. Few important individuals happen to lie perfectly at one end of the pole. Many unimportant individuals, on the other hand, do reside perfectly at one pole, which is why they are unimportant, since they serve neither the purpose of theoretical clarity nor rhetorical transmission; importance implies some broadness in both theoretical and rhetorical appeal. Nor is it the case that what makes an individual important is his (self-assumed) broadness. As Wittgenstein said of Russell, only his books on logic are worthwhile; all his popular writings tended towards mediocrity at best.

Some thinkers are incredibly broad, though this is typically the case of those who are first pushing the discipline forward. Plato is both a monumental theorist and rhetorician, but then he had to be, for otherwise he would've been disregarded by anyone who cared to record his writings. Aristotle, though was a pure theorist, while Sophocles a pure rhetorician.

Myself? I think it obvious that I tend towards clarity even if I sacrifice mass appeal; I care more to be right than to persuade others. The arguments I formulate are not for the benefit of the average person who disagrees, but those who imagine they disagree for purposes of reasoned argument, who can follow a subtle line of reasoning with even subtler distinctions. I don't mean this out of some spite; frankly, I don't give a damn for the opinion of the masses. Agree or disagree, the only thing I care about is a fine and theoretically persuasive line of reasoning.

Pure theory is a game for the elites, who do not condescend nor expect to be understood by the average person. The heights of understanding and insight are for those committed to intellectual development, which is apt to come at the expense of popularity of opinion, seeing as the

average man can barely stomach the simplistic adequations of complex aesthetic, ethical, social, economic, and political notions expositied in the pages of popular magazines like Time. Despite such poverty of understanding, they are led to believe their opinions might be important or somehow on the leading edge, which is itself naturally a flattering front the rhetorician applies in order to persuade the individual that he is appealing to their reason, rather than rationalizing their vanity.

Observation and Motion

Tuesday, May 28, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/28/observation-and-motion/>

There is no observation one can have of the world that is sufficient to establish the reality of motion. This might seem a radical thesis, and it might well be, but it is surprisingly easy to motivate it. Now, it may be the case that there really is motion in the world, but I should like to maintain that our knowledge of motion, of either its quality (i.e. that motion is such-and-such a phenomena in the world) or its reality, is not known by any observation of the world. Proving the reality of motion must at least appeal to a form of idealism, [wherein our perception of motion is really an intuition that allows the world to have a seeming to us](#). (By the way, I am speaking of the physical concept of motion, not the broader sense of motion employed by Aristotle and Aquinas, where motion is just change. Motion here is change in spatial location.)

My argument relies upon it being the case that an observation of true motion is observably indistinguishable from an observation of very fine yet discretely changing instances of static existence. In other words, the two competing theses cannot be distinguished between each other by observation. The prior thesis I will call "motion," the latter thesis I will call "staticity." Both are equally explanatory of what we perceive, and as such, neither is determined to be the case by observation (though it might be distinguished by some other means).

Staticity can be analogously conceived in this way. Suppose I take a series of lights and place them in a row, and set it up so that they will light up in sequence. You've seen constructions like this before, it's essentially something like this:



The purpose of the lights is to provide the illusion of motion. When the lights are larger and farther apart, it is easier to perceive that it is just an illusion. But, make the lights smaller and put them closer together, and eventually you wouldn't be able to perceive the illusion, even if you know it to be just a series of alternately flashing static lights. You've all seen stock tickers, which are an example of this:



Now here, you know that the appearance of motion is just an illusion, yet your eyes can't help but track the words and numbers as if they were actually in motion. We can go even more finely grained, such as you have with computer screens that are a very fine mesh of pixels which, even though they aren't themselves moving, are so small and flash quickly enough that you're even less likely to ever perceive the illusion of motion.

In fact, it is ostensibly the case that you could be presented with a computer screen which, under certain conditions of observations, cannot be distinguished from the real thing; suppose there were a large screen set into the wall which presented a scene of the outdoors and, utilizing motion detecting cameras, could shift the image so that it would always appear from any angle you look at it as though you were really looking out a window. [This is the idea in the hallway scene from Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol.](#)

Now imagine that the world itself were an extremely high resolution holograph, such that what we take to be motion is really just the turning on and off of pixels in space. In reality, the appearance of motion is just a fine illusion of static seemings.

The purpose of this thought experiment cannot be to prove that there is not motion, nor is it sufficient to motivate a Parmenidean thesis (since there is still the reality of change, in that the 'pixels' of the world change colors). However, it does serve to establish that our observation of the world with our senses cannot distinguish between a moving world or a static world.

I suppose an objection to the static thesis might be that "It is immanent that, though we cannot observe by our senses the reality of motion, it is yet the case that as I move through space, my own existence is transferred through space; now, unless my mind were actually moving through space, it should not be possibly the case that it would be my mind in that space after I were to move to it from this space." To such an objection it might be replied in one of two ways:

First, we may claim that the 'pixels' of the world are monadic, i.e. that they possess the ability to instantiate minds. After all, there are a variety of theses about the existence of the mind that this is compatible with; anyone who isn't a [vulgar materialist](#), such as a substance or hylomorphic dualist, maintains the compatibility of changing matter supporting the existence of the one same form. Ergo, different monadic pixels, same mind.

Second, we may take this as some way denying the reality of spatial existence. This would be some sort of idealism. Transcendental idealism might maintain that there is a real material existence, but that this isn't transmitted to us by appearances; rather, appearance is a construct of our mind so that we might have some interpretation of the world before us so that we may act within it. Absolute idealism might go even further and maintain that this inability of the world to transmit its own reality to minds has everything to do with the fact that there isn't anything out there in the world to transmit itself in the first place; were it there, it would, but it doesn't (i.e. it is incapable of transmitting whether it is in motion or static), therefore it isn't. There is no material world, only minds and appearances to minds.

Harems: Men and Women

Tuesday, May 28, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/05/28/harems-men-and-women/>

A harem is a group of individuals centered around a leader, of whom all the members of the harem tend to provide more material support to that leader than the leader provides to them. There is, of course, a more strict etymological definition, but the use of the word presently is suited more to this purpose.

Men, who are most frequently raked over the coals for having desires, quite transparently desire a harem of women who conform to their sexual whims. Good or bad, the desire is there in essentially all men (assuming heterosexuality), because that fits evolutionary purposes. Seeing as this is a phenomena already well-understood, I'll leave it as it is because I don't have a lot to add. Men want sex, and they'll take it if they can get it. Duh. Let's move on and consider something interesting actually.

What is typically overlooked is that women have the same tendency to build up harems, albeit to a different purpose. Women are not looking to gain sexual favors from the men, because sex is a much greater investment on the part of women. However, they are still looking to get other forms of commitment and investment from the men in these harems, typically in the form of material and emotional resources. Even better is to have the men within the harem compete against each other by striving harder to provide more resources than any others; the women simply sits back and lets the process work itself out, giving the winner of these contests a consolation prize in the form of some implied commitment. Then, they go and get themselves "swept off their feet" by some other guy not in the harem.

I am, like usual, not aiming at any sort of judgment, but only looking to provide a material analysis of what is going on. Do I think women are evil for developing harems of men who serve the purpose of emotional tampon? No. But I think it worth bringing up because it is a point of frustration for men and women, especially when they don't see that this is the dynamic taking place. A haremmed man is, in colloquial, "friendzoned," but I am going to use the term "haremmed" since it captures the social phenomena more thoroughly. A woman is typically

incapable of understanding that her haremmed men have sexual desire for her, mistaking the way she feels sexual desire as the way it is felt in men, and when a guy does express desire, she finds this surprising and upsetting, because it ruins the relational balance she had implicitly favored, where the guy gives her what she is looking for and she hints at the possibility of reciprocation.

Of course, there are some women in the world who realize that this takes place, and manipulate their haremmed men for all they can get, and though this is more transparently underhanded, I'm reluctant to condemn because, well, from my perspective this just means fewer guys I'm actually competing against.

Men tend to think of the woman's methodology for selecting mates as being illogical ([just see what the memosphere has to say about "women logic"](#)), and it may be fair to say that even those who consider themselves keen on the way female sexual desire actually works are positivist about the logic, but it seems truer to say that men are confronting not something illogical as much as a process that operates according to different premises. For both men and women, attraction comes down to a feeling, and if it isn't there, it's hard to perceive a romantic relationship as rewarding and satisfying. In men, this feeling is easy to stimulate: just give him a pretty face and a shapely body, and he's good to go. Note that I say it's easy to stimulate, not simple: attraction in men is still a complicated function of beauty, because the ability of a woman to give birth to healthy children correlates most closely to looks.

In women, attraction is just as complicated, albeit more difficult to stimulate. It is a function of not looks so much as indicators of social dominance. Remember that, for women, sex is a greater investment, and what she seeks is the assurance that her mate could provide resources for her and her children, and the ability to provide resources correlates most closely to social dominance than any other quality.

This gives you [the fundamental premise](#) that drives this phenomena of haremming. Men are cheap, thus they are easy to win; women are expensive, thus they are hard to win. Between men and women, when it comes to sex women are more powerful, which is straightforward to analyze with economics. A person with more choices has more power, and women certainly have more choices in the sense that there are always more men attracted to a single woman than there are woman attracted to a single man (*ceteris paribus*). The more demand after a product, the higher price a supplier can charge.

What a man takes as a sign of potential reciprocation (of the sexual kind, obviously) means more than when a man gives a sign of potential reciprocation to a woman. As such, he is easier to lure into a state of asymmetric investment with a woman. Ergo, the women tends to accumulate a harem of asymmetrically invested men, just by nature.

You can think of it as a parallel to this. Highly coveted jobs tend to have many more applications, and those with the power to distribute such jobs can expect higher levels of investment from applicants. They can set higher demands, such as having experience in the field, a degree from a prestigious institution, going through an arduous interviewing process, and so on.

The same sort of dynamic plays itself out automatically between men and women, leading to the phenomena of haremmed men.